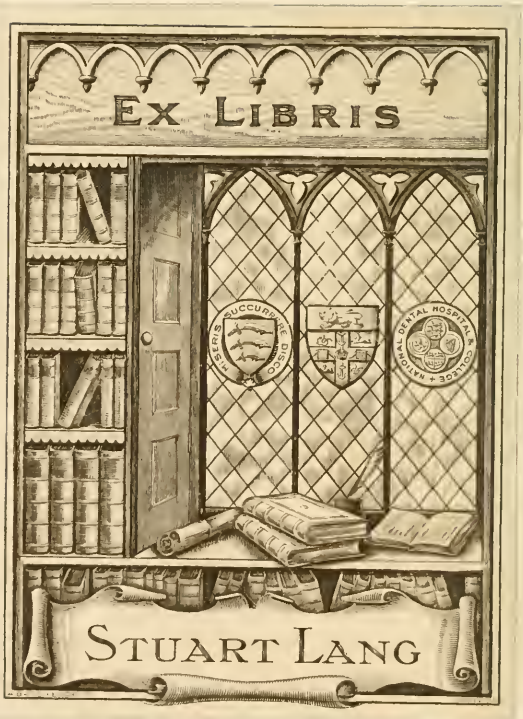
THE CHALLENGE OF THE DEAD

STEPHEN GRAHAM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THE CHALLENGE OF THE DEAD

BOOKS BY STEPHEN GRAHAM

A Vagabond in the Caucasus.
Undiscovered Russia.
A Tramp's Sketches.
Changing Russia.
With the Russian Pilgrims to Jerusalem.
With Poor Emigrants to America.
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The Way of Martha and the Way of Mary.
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A Private in the Guards.
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The Challenge of the Dead.

The Challenge of the Dead

A vision of the war and the life of the common soldier in France, seen two years afterwards between August and November, 1920

By

Stephen Graham

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The Challenge of the Dead

THE suns shines and a strong wind lifts the waves toward the land; the blue sea, in happy commotion, throws armfuls of white spray across the long stone breakwater which is called Zeebruges Mole. The white stone way goes two miles out to sea, and is swept by a marine healthiness. Upon it at intervals stand the German guns with the ends of their barrels burst out like thistle-heads. They point o'er the sea; they have their armoured shelter on the inner side of which on the level with the gunner's eye stand inscribed in neat German *schrift* the distances to all places of importance within gunshot — greenish-yellow camouflaged German guns with something of the tiger in their expression. On the lee side of the Mole cling the giant sheds of hydroplanes—as it were, hooked to the side of the great stone wall. In the quieter water on this side of the Mole one sees jutting out of the fairway the tops of vessels sunk there in 1918, and near by is a tablet marking the spot where the landing-party of the *Vindictive* made its daring raid upon the foe.

The Challenge of the Dead

Zeebruges! A party of school-children in "croc" are being escorted along the way by nuns; the Smiths of Surbiton have scrawled their names on the guns. There is a half-way house on the Mole now where one drinks beer and buys a picture postcard, or at the base of the Mole and looking outward toward England, one may dine alfresco at a Grand Palace Hotel. But what of that! The whole is sun-drowned and wind-swept and bare and open with a spaciousness and grandeur which are ample for the soul. The breeze which blows from England slackens nothing ere it reaches those fields where the wild flowers and the rushes bloom.

The mind goes back to 1914 and that great October when Antwerp fell but Ypres was held—when the last transports rolled alongside this glorious Mole bearing the Seventh Division, soon to be called, in faith, immortal, because half its number was destroyed before the war was very old.

> October fifth they sailed away
> Upon the salt sea's raging spray
> And landed safe in Bruges bay
> Upon their way to Ypres.

They stepped up from the boats, new, ruddy, well equipped, intact—they rolled forward, with drums beating, o'er the Belgian land. Now all who ever will arrive in Zeebruges from o'er the sea will arrive after the Seventh Division. The

war-pilgrim, paying his due of honour to those who came that day, cannot follow very far on their road unless he die also. If he chooses to follow any one soldier, will he not very likely come soon to the road's end and a grey wooden cross where his soldier's destiny dipped into eternity?

Follow, then, the many who ran in the great torch race of the war, where the spent runner handed the torch from his hand to another, who in turn ran with it blazing till he fell, thus from Zeebruges to Ypres; from Ypres, flaming, to Neuve Chapelle; from Neuve Chapelle, flaming, to Loos; then aflame to the defence of the Salient; then a long blaze to the sevenfold altar of the Somme . . . man to man, unit to unit, period to period, till the November when the race was won.

Was it not characteristic of the old war that the "Contemptibles" of the Seventh, landing at Zeebruges, should at once be marched thirty miles in the wrong direction and then brought back by train. Antwerp was the beacon; Antwerp was not yet taken; the Naval Brigade was trying to save it. It was to fall, Zeebruges was to fall, Ostende itself was to fall—all very rapidly. When the boys got to Bruges it was rumoured that the Germans had had a set-back; when they got to Ostende they heard that Antwerp had been taken. When they got back to Bruges terror had seized the city. When they got to Ghent they took the

Antwerp road—and then they came back, to Ypres.

The cobbled way to Bruges is not marked by destruction. The trees give shade, the houses stand, the fields are ploughed. Alice in an estaminet says she learned French from the French prisoners kept there—her bar used to be crowded with them. The Belfry of Bruges stands against the sky ahead—as if lifted out of the plain up to heaven itself.

You cross a canal which looks like a moat, and are in Bruges itself, a perfectly whole, undamaged, serene and peaceful city. Trams, shops, carts pulled by dogs, rows of estaminets, old gateways, old churches, and then the Grande Place. The broad market-place is empty, but one sits facing the great tower and listens to the ever-repeating chimes of the bells—silver in the evening hour. It is—no, it is impossible—yes, it is "The Rosary" which is being played by the bells. "*I . . . strive . . . to kiss the Cross,*" yells the steeple, and then goes plaintive and trickles tunefully away.

"Well, here I am and here I remain," says an old man sitting behind me with a coffee-glass which he has long since drained. "Till England becomes sane, I stay here."

"The cost of living is just as high in Peebles as in London," says a woman sitting opposite him.

"Mad everywhere," says the man. "What I'd like is a flat somewhere near Lancaster Gate, so as I could go out into Kensington Gardens and sit under the trees and smoke."

There was a pause.

Then the woman from Peebles ventured in a thin, small voice:

"I think that Peter Pan statue in Kensington is so sweet. It was put up in the night, wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was; and isn't Kensington a delightful place?" says the old man.

They gloated in silence over Kensington. The bells of the Belfry began selections from *Faust*. *Is there a war on?* men used to ask facetiously. "There never was any war," says Bruges. The sound of the boots has long since died away, the *boots, boots, boots, boots, marching up and down again*, away, away—this city was not delivered unto the Angel of Death.

It's a shady highway that goes eastward to Ostende. At the village of St. Andrews there is a first war memorial to Belgian soldiers who gave their lives in the war; and then you come to the open ground at Varssenaere where the 20th Brigade did outpost duty, the first resting-ground for many a man, if rest he could, on his first night on the terrain of war—Varssenaere, a mean red-brick village with estaminets and small shops. Next day 'twas Steine and then Ostende.

October 9, 1914, they marched into Ostende station, crowded with wounded men who had been rushed down from the stricken front. Antwerp had fallen. The trains which brought the wounded down took the new army back—back to Bruges, on to Ghent, and tumbled it out into that great old city. The streets were full of refugees, but the khaki tide rolled forward through the crowds, past the cathedral, out by the Lokeren road, to meet the foe.

Ghent also is an undamaged city. Our airmen spared her; our cannon could not reach her. She was not taken by assault, but fell into the enemy's hands. It is prosperous, all its factory chimneys are a-smoke. Cheap plenitude fills its shop windows. Its people are at work—or, rather, they are at work when there is not a *groodefeest*.

It is calm on the Lokeren road. You cannot hear the battle-thunder of that October now, the ominous and insistent and encroaching roaring of the monster who was just spitting and flashing fire at Ghent in those days. You can see with the mind's eye the new army with its new boots and its sore feet and its loads of equipment. It did not carry bombs and it did not carry gas-masks, but it carried everything else. One can see the perplexed and anxious Staff looking at the *intelligence* brought in—the Germans held nowhere, the Germans in vast numbers, truly ready and capable of sweeping the contemptibly little army

into the sea, the Germans advancing everywhere. The order comes to retire. Retire—retreat—might not the retreat from Antwerp resemble the retreat from Mons? It is retreat in any case. Back into Ghent; back, perhaps, to Bruges and to Ostende. No one talks of Ypres. The army does not yet know where Ypres is. However, they filed through Ghent, and it was once more boots, boots, boots, boots over the cobbled roads. It was midnight, and they traversed the whole broad metropolis—singing a song which has not been forgotten in all the intervening years.

But now it is midnight again, the night of the 1920 National Fête, and the whole population has got singing drunk and then screaming drunk on beer. Tens of thousands of men and women flock the streets. There are fireworks, there is music, there is dancing. The fronts of the estaminets have been taken out, and seats go from the bar to the middle of the street; long tables on trestles, and plank seats, have been put out; piles of shrimps litter the tables from end to end, and the yellow beer gleams as it streams. Tired children are massed on the cathedral steps waiting for the fireworks to begin, and past those who sit surges a tireless crowd.

In the Groensel Maarkt a truly Dostoieffskian scene. A soldier with one arm, a diminutive woman with dislocated hips, and two children are singing Flemish songs to a ring of people of vary-

ing ages. The old soldier has a sheaf of leaflets with the words of the songs and sells them a penny a time, a small boy plays the concertina, "mother" sings all the while a murmuring sing-song which never rises or falls, and keeps time with her wasp-like waist, which seems to hang from the black hump of her hips and sways uncannily back and forth. Father with the one arm also sings all the while he sells, the little girl sings, and the boy playing the concertina sings also. To the tune of "Way Down in Tennessee" they sing:

Ik noem haar mijn everzwijn
Mijn voddenmagazijn

They sing too, over and over again, a Flemish song about the war:

Nog niet genoeg dat hij
Binst d'oorlog was in 't lij
Tot overmaat huns laffe daad
Der duitschers vol van haat. . .

and a haunting chorus which begins:

Hoe . . . kan het bestaan
Dat men een man, die gansch zijn plicht
toch heeft gekweten

and glasses of beer pass over the heads of the audience to the singing family. All in a dark, empty market-place, with somebody's statue look-

ing down on the scene and many a tear softening human eyes.

The rockets shoot up to the height of the cathedral spire and break in coloured lights, the large catherine-wheels are lit, the children clap and chase one another for firework cases.

At two in the morning strings of men and women holding on to one another parade the streets and kick out with their legs, attempting to dance whilst they sing "Tipperary," "Marguerite," "Mademoiselle from Armentières," "Hoe kan het bestaan," the new girls in knee-skirts with spindly legs, the old wives in longer heavier ones, exposing when they dance white baggy drawers like Canterbury bells. At four in the morning there are still ten thousand in the streets; men and women have made circles round trees and lamp-posts, and kick out as they try to roll round; knots of men and girls go staggering past with howls and yells; young Flemish fellows are squeezing girls of twenty and pressing down their cheeks with large-mouthed kisses. At six, in the heavenly radiance of a pure morning, pandemonium still rolls on.

Yes, it is good beer. The first glass of it on a hot day is refreshing—a flagon at lunch does not come amiss. But these men and women sat for hours pouring it in with floating shrimps—glasses, quarts, sitting on low seats with their legs apart, and visibly filling. And this plenitude did not

make them weary. *Au contraire*, beer got into their toes and their knees and their thighs and their fat arms and necks, and expressed itself at all points of the body. I suppose one good reason for running in queues was that all holding on to one another none could fall down. One of the reasons why the bacchanalia continued long after morning-life had supervened was that many had forgotten they had any homes and mostly did not know where they were.

What a night! Six years ago on that other night it was different. Anxiety and foreboding throbbed in these streets. Belgian manhood in arms marched away. The British marched away, and by midnight the last soldier had gone. Suspense . . . and then at two in the morning the first German, a motor-cyclist, armed, goggled, covered with dust, vigilant. . . . And from the dawn German order reigned in Ghent — no bacchanalias.

The army went out by night by many roads, making, however, for Bruges. It fell back for the defence, perhaps, of Bruges and of Ostende. Brussels had fallen, and Ghent—there was not much of Belgium left. The first morning out of Ghent saw the army at Somerghem, and the second at Thielt. So tired were the troops that at each halt in the night both officers and men, lying down by the roadside, fell asleep. At the halts the men bumped into one another mechanically,

like the trucks of a freight train coming to a sudden stop, and then they just tumbled down and snored.

Newly tarred barges loll slowly along the Bruges-Ghent canal, and there is a vista along the straight water to the belfry of Ghent and the cathedral. The sides of the canal are lush with verdure; health and happiness spread out from its banks. One would say also the war never was here. But in Somerghem the old church on the hill crowning the town has been blown up. Its tower gave a view for leagues around, and the Devil made good use of it when he had a chance and when he had done his task blew it up lest others should follow his example. The Germans evacuated the town just before the end of the war; the Belgian army bombarded it and placed a gas concentration there. It was retaken, but at the price of a most beautiful church. The inhabitants are all back. They remember the Tommies and, of course, the Scots. The Gordons in their kilts made a lasting impression. Somerghem saw much war life before the enemy marched away, and German soldier life, with its violently repressive military discipline and its correspondingly lax morality, was rife. The more perfect their military obedience the less heed there was of God.

One sees in these parts not a few war-babies, and worse than these, for they are innocent enough, one sees war-children in adolescence. The numbers

of depraved young girls is appalling. Perhaps there were many before the war, but they look rather like war products. How many of them there are in the beer-houses and backyards of the small towns! It is difficult to avoid adventures with them. Bertha and Martha, depraved little rascals, come running along the canal bank, one in clogs, one in stocking soles. They talk scraps of German and scraps of French, and make disgusting gestures and throw themselves about in hard, coarse laughter. Martha is a strong and brazen little hussy with red face and fat little arms. Bertha is a soft-witted, pallid slip of a girl with full throat and weak lips. Both have long black finger-nails, both are in cotton rags; but Bertha has a large yellow festering wound on her ankle which she says was caused by a bit of shrapnel. Bertha is the younger. Martha may be sixteen; Bertha would be two years younger. And Martha would get Bertha into trouble. "Take Bertha!" she says continually, suggestively making signs. Poor war-children! When the war began Martha was ten and Bertha was eight. Martha was corrupted in it; pale, sickly, weak-lipped Bertha, with the shrapnel wound, perhaps not actually corrupted. When the wound had been examined and their nails cut they concluded they had met a doctor.

They scamper away at last. The dark water of the canal flows peacefully between banks of

untarnished green. Nature is unqualified loveliness. At Somerghem, however, behind this veil there has been war, there has been something of the curse. One begins to notice in old walls patches of new brick where shell-holes in human habitations have been cobbled. Re-pointing is going on. The splash where the splinters of iron rived a whole house has been sought to be gently erased. The most virtuous work in the world! But it splashed on to the children too, and who can re-point the Berthas and the Marthas?

Enfin, the fair-sized town of Thielt, would-be picturesque but surprisingly shabby, not clean, not cleaned up, not quite like Belgium. The dirtiest of all possible hotels, more like a billet than a hotel, unswept floors, smashed china, supper in a kitchen which does not gleam like housewife's honour. It is a town unlike Ghent, unlike Bruges. It has not, however, been much shelled. British and Belgian gunners seem to have had orders to spare friendly cities. But there is no doubt that Thielt was in the war. Half its present inhabitants are *revenants*, as the French call those pitiful spirits who return to the places where they used to live. Mine host fled to Paris in 1914, and did not make a fortune there; he talks bitterly of *Bosches* and compensation. He is forty-six and set. Six years ago he felt a young man, he says, but to-day he is not ready to start anything new.

On then towards Roulers! 'Tis in gloomier

country and with poor people. All high roads are under repair. If shells spared Thielt, they did not spare the roads. Where British army leather beat the cobbles in that long march back from Ghent, whistling shells touched later and blew up the ground that had been beneath their feet. The patient Flemish farmers hung on to their farms on each side of the shell-pitted road, and their cattle grazed in the fields with an equanimity that was sublime. For four years the cannon-thunder never ceased, and every night war flamed around the heavens, but the men on the soil remained true to the soil and drove straightly their ploughs.

Not a few farmers were killed; they also were heroes, for they died at their posts. But no patriotic cockade marks their humble graves. Plentiful now are the crosses ornamented with flowers and the red, white and blue, for those *morts pour la patrie*. Above Ardoye the first-noticed wayside cemetery of German soldiers appears, and there lies Franz Delmann, of Chemnitz, and many others who died in November, 1917. It is high up on a ridge beside the position of an old German battery. How the shells used to howl from this eminence over Roulers, over Passchendaele and leagues of destruction right into Ypres itself! Here in old days the grubby war-worn Germans plied the guns, and here the British guns found their prey also, and our enemies were put to sleep in this acre of death.

Now most of the crosses are down, the cross-pieces of others have been taken away, part of the field has been dug up with a spade. For after all the ground is appropriated Belgian property. It was never paid for and it reverts to its owner, dead and all. What a pathetic tragedy is that of the dead the Germans left behind! Each cross, each dead one, refers back to some living family, some home, some set of human circumstances. What thoughts, what questions do not go out on the air from obscure homes to the dead who have been left behind! The reins which go from the living to the dead!

But enemies take little stock of one another's dead. Roulers, which is vis-à-vis to Ypres, lay partially destroyed and now it is being builded up again. If the dead could be made to pay for it the dead would. The living for the living! Roulers was a fine city once. The creative eye sees that it can be so again. The British gunners could have laid it flat as Ypres but they did not. Ypres can never be raised. But Roulers will be Roulers once again. As one approaches it, behold, what activity. New houses have sprung up overnight. There are thousands of piles of bricks. Every Belgian has learned bricklaying. Clerks, shopkeepers, salesmen, porters, in shirt sleeves and plaster-sprinkled hats, are at work—*without trade union rules.* Hundreds of thousands of whitish vermilion flesh-coloured old bricks are

being made fit to use again, new bricks in tiers are apparent in improvised kilns, and all day and every day sounds the chipping and slapping of real reconstruction. Iron girders are being fitted into the gutted depths of old shop-fronts, and with foundations and framework it is marvellous how speedily old houses are built up. The city is poor. Its many factory chimneys are innocent of smoke. Roulers for flax! It was famous for its linen industry. Two Scotch engineers, met at a hotel, are fitting in new machinery in the factories. Typical uncommunicative Britons, they volunteer no information, but sit face to face over their meals, lean over their food and chuckle to one another in private monosyllables. When asked how they are getting on, one of them replies:

"Och slowly, man, slowly. They Chairmans didna leave muckle when they went awa!"

And six years ago the Army continued to fall back. Zeebruges whence it had started, Bruges and Ostende, and Ghent which it had marched through, became enemy country without much shedding of blood. No one stood long for their defence. After Roulers the name of a much less famous place than Bruges or Ghent came on to men's lips. Did they know that they were going to stand for the defence of it? No, it is all unlikely. And as they marched to Ypres they providentially did not know the four years' hell

of which they trod the stage. War all over by Christmas was their thought if they thought at all as they marched o'er the ridge of Passchendaele in October, 1914.

The soldier, it is said, has an elementary mind which does not imagine, does not think—a regimental mind. Others therefore must think about him and do the thinking for him. See, the dusty khaki-clad regulars as yet unbaptised by fire, but unknowingly on the brink of annihilation, treading the ground where

> Few shall part where many meet . . .
> And every turf beneath their feet
> Shall be a soldier's sepulchre.

Thus they marched into Ypres—" as pretty a town as you'd care to see after a day's march." Oh, it's highly romantic to look back to it now.

> Banners yellow, glorious golden,
> On its roof did float and flow.
> This, all this, was in the olden time
> Long ago.

The business centre of Ypres was invested with a dignity which was not merely commercial in those old days when the silver chimes rolled regularly the quarter-hours from the Cloth Hall tower. And the Army arrived, the army for the defence of Ypres. They will dig trenches and throw out wire south of Ypres, looking at Kemmel without know-

ing its name, walking on Hill 60 before it was numbered and named.

A quiet and little marked country south of Roulers now gives way first to trees not quite dead but sprouting green from black trunks, and then to blasted trees dead to the core. After a mile or so farm-houses and cultivation cease and one enters the terrible battle area of Passchendaele, all pits, all tangled with corroded wire—but now as it were in tumultuous conflict with Nature. Chiefly remarkable are the magnificent rushes with their black tops rising from almost every shell-hole. The stagnancy has not dried up, but festers still in black rot below the rushes. Double shell-holes, treble shell-holes, charred ground, great pits, bashed-in dug-outs, all overgrown with the highest of wild flowers—pink willow-herb, burly St. John's wort in a yellow glare, starry blue of outbreaking chicory, hundred-headed blossoming sweet thistles growing from the hollows where fell, I doubt not, Caledonia's sons, foxgloves flowering upward attempting to take crimson to heaven. Ypres by the compass lies south-west. No, there is nothing on the horizon, not a wall, not a wood, only the bare eminence of Kemmel Hill. Before you is a vast fen. Some Flemings are at work on it in shirt sleeves, but not a soul is traversing it. You constantly change your direction : there is no going directly. It is impassable. You make for what once was a wood; it afforded cover. What

is it now—thrice thrashed and riven, the abode of rats, lizards, weasels, a calamitous and precipitous abyss covered with wreckage. Unexploded stick-bombs, rusty grog-bottles, helmets, lie there still in plenty. Weather-beaten ammunition baskets with shells intact lie where they fell off the ammunition waggons or where men dropped them. There are broken rifles, there are graves. There is all but the blood. But from the blood has risen flowers.

On the vast waste you come upon houses built of salvage. Duck-boards have been gathered in, old bits of rusty corrugated iron which sheltered trenches and kept out rain have been collected by the returned Flemish—what a return!—and they have made shacks of shreds and patches. Fierce dogs on chains bark from them; no children venture forth—there are no children there. Heaps of the jetsam of the battlefields are in the yards. The uncouth workers are not too pleased to see any stranger, and look suspiciously at you. They have pistols ready at need. For these oases in the wilderness are not unvisited by robbers, and thieves lurk in old holes in the ground. It has needed courage to come back to your old ten acres. Few of these Flemish are owners; they are only tenants. Their landlords allow them now three years rent free. From the hut made of salvage starts the regeneracy of the land. In an irregular patch round its gates lies the first reclaimed

ground, a mere kail yard, a bean plot. There are wonderful crops of beans, higher than beans are wont to grow, bean-stalks to climb up. Tobacco also has been growing, for the leaves hang wilting from green to yellow on the outside of the unpainted wooden walls. But beyond the oasis the tall black-topped reeds, like Guardsmen of the vegetable world, go rank beyond rank to the eyes' end. One comes to a road, and there is what was Zonnebeke resurrected in a tail of diminutive cabins each roofed with corrugated iron, each numbered as a claim for reparation. Not a few of the houses are named thus:—"In den Niewen wereld." Half of them seem to be estaminets.

It is the same at Becelaere. The people earn a living drinking beer in one another's estaminets.

"I wouldn't never have come back had I known it was like this," says a Belgian woman. "I had good job at Rouen all the war, make plenty money, not like this."

"How was that?"

"Me cook in sergeants' mess, huh, plenty food, plenty money."

"That's where you learned English?"

"Yes."

There were two British Tommies drinking beer at the estaminet, one an R.E. the other an R.F. both talking knowingly about the old war. They had a motor-lorry which was waiting outside.

"Take a lift?" said they.

"Where to?"

"Polygon Wood."

To be on one of those old blundering kindly quixotic lorries again, pounding along a war-stricken highway! One might have thought the old lorry had now ceased its devils' dance. But no, it still has a duty to perform. Presently we pass a red-cross ambulance.

"Got any to-day?" cries the R.E. to the driver of the ambulance.

He puts up two fingers.

"Two . . " says the soldier with an air of satisfaction. "We found a brigadier-general yesterday," he adds.

"How do you mean?"

"Ex-umed 'im. He'd bin missin' since 1916. All this no-man's land bein' dug up now," said he with a wide sweep of his hand.

"That your job? It's pretty interesting."

"It's jolly hard work. But it 'as its better side. Some fellers the other day came on a dug-out with three officers in it, and they picked up five thousand francs between 'em."

The motor-lorry blundered forward toward a stone obelisk planted on a man-made hillock. On one side was a swamp of green stagnant water; on the other was a planting out of many hundred crosses of unvarnished wood. The lorry is full of crosses each named and numbered, roped up in

scores, and these must be dumped inside the enclosure.

The view from the Polygon monument is desolation on all sides. One living man standing there is as it were monarch of all the dead. It is a remarkable eminence, a pillar at Thermopylæ, one thing standing where all else is lying flat. As it stands to-day it has no inscription. Polygon—myriad-sided—it is one of the strangest standing places and shrines of the war. Pause thou who livest: salute the dead!

Back thunders the empty lorry—on to the Menin road—and faces Ypres. You see the grey contour of the tower afar, but doubt whether you are approaching a city, so flat has all become. Yet certainly it is Ypres. You enter by a series of new-painted wooden taverns and hotels. You walk up a wide main street and there is Ypres——

A great dust storm is raging here whilst the sun shines out of a perfect sky. Here are no rushes, no wild flowers, no moisture, but only infinite debris and the shatterings of old masonry. There is a suggestion of the desert. A notice says "THIS IS HOLY GROUND" and a barbed wire fence runs round the whole centre of old Ypres. Within that enclosure lies a ruined city. Thousands of years ago such a thing happened; all the people were slain or taken into bondage. No

one came back, the victors went away, and the ruins remained glaring in the sands—centuries, millenniums. That is the impression of Ypres to-day. It is grim and moving. It is like the Pyramids. At least a hundred thousand dead lie round it—an inner circle of the dead and an outer circle of decay. Looking on those spacious sun-steeped, sand-blown ruins one's mind is inevitably taken to the East, and a sense of Shelley's poem comes to one—

> My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,
> Look on my works, ye mighty, and despair.

Yet six years ago the Cloth Hall tower chimed the quarter-hours! The road out from the Menin gate was shady. Polygon Wood was a wood, not a monument. There was seemingly a château near a wood called Hooge. Zandwoorde Church had a spire. Behold the army however digging itself in. There are rudimentary lines of defence making a spider's web across the Menin road. The Twentieth Brigade flounders from Zandwoorde to Gheluvelt in newly upturned earth. The Germans who followed so rapidly to Ghent and Thielt and Roulers are hot on the trail, expecting Ypres also to be left to them without a blow. But they have not arrived. Our men are sitting on the parapets of their trenches, singing. There have been no casualties to mention, a few men lost sight of; three sentries in fact left unrelieved at

Ghent. There is a battalion of Guards in the line at Klein Zillebeke, and not one has yet been killed or wounded. A battle is coming, however, for the retirement has ceased.

You turn out of Ypres by the left hand on a road which faces Kemmel Hill—the Wytschaete road, and you come to a flattened-out village at cross-roads, called Kruistraat. Where were once ploughed fields is now a land-ocean of humps and hollows with a foam of wild flowers. Plunging toward Voormezeele one is intoxicated by a perfume and looking to the right you see the cause in a field of thistles as thick and close as wheat. At what was Voormezeele there is now nothing more remarkable than the crosses of the P.P.C.L.I. the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, who evidently went down in the most terrible way in 1915. Were not these the Canadians who first tasted the devilry of gas?

Cemeteries soon become all too frequent and unremarkable. At Klein Zillebeke there is an Englishwoman going from grave to grave diligently examining the aluminium ribbons on which the names are fixed to the wooden crosses—looking perhaps for her husband's grave but with an expression in her face and form of "They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him."

Virbranden Molen, where many encamped, is but a name now, and eastward the wire-covered

duck-boards climb across the rushes and thistles to what was once a front line, past derelict limbers with rusty broken wheels, past unexploded five-nines—the wildest way. Reeds have filled the trenches, grass long and withered swarms o'er the parapets. There are heaps of rusty Mills bombs which no one has ever come to take away and no one will; there are ration-tins; there is all manner of army rubbish everywhere. Pilgrims and tourists evidently collect few souvenirs on the old Ypres front, and few Americans as yet arrive at Ypres, which has for them a lesser fame than Château Thierry and Verdun.

In October, 1914, the line was far in advance of what became such a carnage-strewn battlefield. Here is the railway cutting, then in supreme peace, and beyond it is a pale British monument inscribed with many names, though already defaced —to the memory of a lost mining and tunnelling company that took a sudden way to heaven before the war was won. Beyond it is a first German grave,where lie Fleully, Beck, Dechert, Mehlhorn, and an unknown, and helmets and old bombs strew the place where they lie. Klein Zillebeke is now marked by a huge concrete fort. Zandwoorde and Kruisseecke, which were scenes of hand-to-hand fighting in 1914, soon fell into German hands and remained within the enemy's lines throughout the war. The old church at Zandwoorde cannot now be identified by any ruins

—one has to ask where it was. Even the bricks and the stones seem to have been swept away, but there are three graves there, Captain Rose and Lieutenant Turnor, of the Tenth Hussars, and a private soldier nameless and unknown, a sort of batman in death. An estaminet has jumped up like a weed beside the ruins but it has little trade. Zandwoorde was once a substantial little place but now perhaps it will not grow again so readily—it is off the main road and not served by rail. Kruisseecke will be bigger. On October 21st the Gordons drove the Germans back from Zandwoorde at the point of the bayonet. On that day the church tower was twice struck by shells. That was about the beginning of the history.

The old trenches 'twixt Zandwoorde and Gheluvelt are worn down and perhaps were never very deep. The shell-holes are much deeper. The land is desolate and all o'ergrown but it affords a scene of lesser desolation. The exhumers are patiently seeking for the dead who were left behind—the old dead of that first battle. It is ghoulish work, but they have become as matter of fact as can be.

"No, we don't find many Gordons. But we're picking up a lot o' Borders just now. Yes, and some Grenadiers. Brought in about thirty Borders yesterday. It isn't a bad job if they'd pay us more. We gets used to it. They say as how the Americans won't have the British touch their

dead and have given the job over to the French. Fifteen thousand of them to be boxed and stuffed —there's a lot of work in that."

"You must dig up a fair number of Germans. What do you do with them?"

"Leave them where they are. We notifies the authorities, that's all. Of course Jerry buried most of his own, and I'll give him credit for that, he gave every man his eight feet. You don't so easy come across a man the Germans buried, but some of ours——"

The weather-beaten Tommy, in old flannel shirt and sagging breeches, waved his hand and grinned with mirth at our British ways.

"'S a funny thing though—the British dead keep much longer than the Germans. If I put a spade through something and it's soft, I know it's a Jerry."

"They say the body of a drunkard keeps fresh longest of all because of the spirit in it."

"Yes, that's true. And if buried in an oilskin it makes a heap of difference. But it's queer what you find. We came on a fellow the other day with a bayonet through his jaw. He'd been buried that way. No one could get the bayonet out——"

"Aren't the Germans doing anything to keep their dead? The Belgians would look after them if they got a hint from Berlin that it would be worth while."

"Oh, we'd bury them like Christians if they'd

give us another half-crown on our wages. We ain't got nothing agin 'em—specially the dead."

"Do you sleep out here on this battlefield?"

"We bin 'ere six months now."

"No ghosts?"

The man smiled. He saw none. He felt the presence of none. Imagination did not pull his heart-strings. If it did, he would go mad.

Lying in an old trench behold a skull! It is clean and polished—a soldier's head, low and broad at the brows, high at the back. There is a frayed hole in an otherwise perfect cranium. The simplest way to pick it up would be to put a finger in an eye-hole and lift it. You must put both hands together and raise it fearfully if it be the first skull you have ever found. . . Friend or foe? Hm—there are no identification marks on this. Thinking anything about it all? No, nothing—long since ceased to think. Friends living? Probably, somewhere. The more you look at the skull the more angry does it seem—it has an intense eternal grievance. This one does not grin, for the mouth has been destroyed. It is just blind and senseless for ever and ever.

Such is the Golgotha of Zandwoorde. Gheluvelt, the other end of the line, has now a diminutive yellow tower of new wood from an improvised church. Kruisseecke is a rusty-roofed, ramshackle, salvage-built settlement on the site of

complete ruin. You see the yellow tower of Gheluvelt from all around, and like a livid finger the monument at Polygon Wood is seen far o'er the battlefields pointing to heaven.

In the whole complex story of the battle of Ypres, where so many regiments were engaged in such diverse parts of the field, with all their varying calamities and triumphs, it is only possible to realise the story in glimpses and aperçus. A thousand dramas were being enacted simultaneously in a clamour so great that no neighbour understood what was happening to his neighbour. Tragedy was accomplished, swiftly and as it were privately. A dreadful way of speaking was begotten afterwards, and men said "He got *his* at Polygon Wood," or "he got *his* at the Château," or "*his* at Kruisseecke."

Our gallant marchers, with the confetti as it were still sticking to them, have seen a great deal of Belgium, have been greatly excited, have reached Ypres with numbers intact, have taken their stand four feet deep in the clay of the fields of Zandwoorde and have taken a look round. They have been shelled. The shells have been falling irrelevantly—far from them. The first man to perish is a colour-sergeant, who, taking a stroll, gets shot by accident by an over-hasty sentry. The colour-sergeant did not quite realise the war till then. Others also did not realise the silent symbol

of the fact that in fighting others you start by killing yourselves. Next to die is a drummer-boy, killed by a shell on the way to a hamlet called America, a kilometre beyond Kruisseecke. With what pathos was that dead boy considered! For he was a child of the Army. Drummer-boys are nearly always orphans, or boys without homes, brought up in barracks, taught in the Army school, with the Army for father and mother, the Army for God, the Army for nurse. Little drummer-boy dead on the way to America—the first to go West! It is a matter for pause, for a sad thought. If, however, the dead meet one another in the other world, as so many now believe, the boy will soon be comforted, for within the week scores of friends, hundreds of acquaintances, will join him. See a reconnaissance at Polygon Wood and Eskernest! Out of a whole company, only twenty-five come back. Its commander killed. Another company half destroyed—its commander killed also. Two captains buried side by side near a much-shelled house—rudimentary wooden crosses put o'er their resting-place. They were eager impetuous captains who had chafed to wait in England all August and September. Their minds were full of what the war really meant. But so soon are they sped! For four years the agony of Ypres beginning in these days will roll impotently on whilst they lie there, and the war with its gossip, its articles and speeches, its new

inventions and new bitternesses will go on. God loved them and removed them betimes from the scene.

Yet if they see, if they can hear and know from other realms, what a spectacle, what an intense interest is theirs. To see the remains of their own poor companies of soldiers march back to Zandwoorde—the "not the six hundred," to see the ever-encroaching German and the more and more intimate and terrible strife proceed. The grand emotions of pity and fear thrill the air as the tumultuous battle goes on. . .

The shell-fire ceases to be irrelevant and finds its mark, turns whole brigades out of their trenches; reinforcements move with the acceleration of a moving ant-heap which has been kicked over. False news comes and confounds true news. The Borders are said to have given way. Guards and Gordons go to their support. Weak points change to strong points, strong to weak. Columns of assault are launched by the enemy, first on one point, then on another. A column breaks through at Kruisseecke at nightfall. The madness of the murder-excitement enters the trenches, and it is bayonet to bayonet; the rain streams down to mingle with blood, it is intensely dark, many have lost their clearness of mind and balance of nerve. But there is a counter-attack. Gallant Major F——, leading, is shot down; there is a dreadful mêlée and then silence. The enemy is winning

his way. Nevertheless patrols in Kruisseecke round up a large number and take them prisoner. There is a dispute as to who is to have the merit of having taken the prisoners. But what does that matter? Round about this village is confusion worse confounded. Germans appear dressed up as Gordon Highlanders, then Gordons are thought to be Germans in disguise. Strange masses roll up through the rain looking not at all like Germans and crying "We are French."—"We are Allies"—"Don't shoot"—"Where is Captain P——?" "We surrender," and things of that kind. The survivors of a Staffordshire regiment devoid of officers, officers all down and out, come pelting through the lines having thrown their rifles away. German yells of victory break out. . . . It is a terrible night, one night, one little corner of the ground outside the city. Dawn comes, and Kruisseecke is with the enemy. It remains with the enemy. And there for many the march from Zeebruges ends and a personal war history is concluded. The torch of war has been carried thus far, to the battle of Ypres. The spent runner gives it to another who carries it in turn—

Back then to Ypres! It is an exposed moorland way. No woods, no houses stop the even progress of the wind. The trees are stumps no higher than Venetian masts. Instead of crops in the fields—crosses, an enormous harvest. Along

the Menin road a steam tram rolls. At the entrance to Ypres is the communal cemetery of the city. Here, around the pre-war Belgian dead, lie Hussars, Lancers, Dragoon Guards, Scots Guards, all officers, all of the 1914 fighting. There they were lowered into graves with the flag about them—there they remain. In this acre of death the high wooden crucifix still stands, with its riven agonised Lord looking down. Of the hundreds of thousands of shells which fell in Ypres all spared Him—all but one which came direct and actually hit the Cross. That one did not explode but instead, half-buried itself in the wood and remains stuck in the upright to this day—an accidental symbol of the power of the Cross.

Ypres is terribly empty. Hundreds of thousands of eyes would look on it but there are few people who come to look at it—just ones and twos who stand diminutively in front of the great ruins and peer at them like the conventional figures in an old print. This absence of the living intensifies the strange atmosphere. It is said that the city will build itself up again, but it is possible to feel some doubt on that point. Perhaps Ypres will never be built again. At present it has some hundred and fifty places where they sell beer to two where they sell anything else. Its string of wooden hotels with cubicle bedrooms do not pay.

The curious come for an hour or so from Ostende but do not spend the night. There is a sense of emptiness and tragedy which cannot be dispelled. Some sort of unit of British troops does duty instead of police and is posted to various guards, the sentries being however without rifles. The soldiers in their "sixth year" impart a certain liveliness. A party of them at night coming down the middle of the street singing

> One word of thine,
> Tell the world you are mine,
> And the world will be dearer to me,

in a full-throated chorus wakens echoes from dark corners of the ruins. There is music and dancing in favoured taverns. The returned Belgians do not perhaps belong naturally to the atmosphere of the sublime. They love beer and sociality. They will make their money by some means—they are not too particular how. Civilised ethics do not rule in these places where war has worked its will.

Strolling along at dusk past the Cloth Hall tower a bright-eyed Belgian wolf asks you who you are. "*C'est triste, n'est ce pas?*" says he, pointing to the ruins. *Triste* is what they are not. The Belgian is from Poperinghe. It is very dull there now. *Tous les soldats sont partis.* Also the mamzelles. Pas de jig-a-jig.

"Like a glass of beer?" asks the Belgian.

A spare woman of thirty serves two glasses of

ale at a table outside a hotel. She seems to speak English for preference.

"You want someone to sleep with?" asks the man from Poperinghe.

"No, I sleep with no man."

"Not married?"

"No, and plenty time yet, and I shan't marry an English when I do. The English are all false."

The man from Poperinghe seems taken aback. At a further table a curious scene is being enacted. Here are sitting a pioneer corporal and a sergeant, both wearing the 1914 ribbon. They have their beer, and between them is an effervescent loose-mouthed Alsatian. The latter, like the man from Poperinghe, stands treat.

"I vill take you, one minit, I vill take you," says the Alsatian, kissing the tips of his fingers, "just vait, not ten minits from 'ere."

"Oh you go on, you bloomin' well shut up. I b'lieve you're agent for the girl or something," says the sergeant.

"No, listen, I'll tell you vot it is. . . C'est de gateau, got that, gateau; naw need to drink any coffee, just ten minits, you see for yourself."

The sergeant makes a mocking show of biffing him in the eye, and grins all over his weak sunburnt face. The shoeing corporal sips at his beer and smirks. The Alsatian on the tips of his toes,

leaning forward on his chair which is tilted toward the table, gesticulates and slobbers—

"You wait till you see her, you'll felicitation yourself. . ."

And the sergeant is persuaded against his will and goes with him. Meanwhile dusk has grown to dark, and the ruined Cloth Hall tower on the other side of the way seems more gloomy, more moody and threatening, as if the war were not yet over.

This Ypres is a terrible place still. There is no life when night comes on but tavern life. Those who live and work here have lost their sense of proportion. They are out of focus somehow. "You lookin' for dead soldiers," says a Flemish woman to you with a glaring stare, wondering if you are one of the exhumers. Death and the ruins completely outweigh the living. One is tilted out of time by the huge weight on the other end of the plank, and it would be easy to imagine someone who had no insoluble ties killing himself here, drawn by the lodestone of death. There is a pull from the other world, a drag on the heart and spirit. One is ashamed to be alive. You try to sleep in a little bed in a cubicle with tiny doll's house window. You listen to a drunken company down below singing, "Mademoiselle, have you got any rum?" A French couple enter the room next door, smacking one another's hips and confounding one

another with coarse violent laughter—that is the light end of the plank. Then night ensues, the real night, breathless and sepulchral, the night which belongs to all lost hopes and ended lives and wearinesses.

You lie listless, sleepless, with Ypres on the heart, and then suddenly a grand tumult of explosion, a sound as of the tumbling of heavy masonry. You go to the little window, behold, the whole sky is crimson once more, and living streamers of flame ascend to the stars. An old dump has gone up at Langhemarcq. Everyone in Ypres looks out and then returns to sleep—without excitement. The lurid glare dies down; stertorous night resumes her sway o'er the living and the dead. For a moment it was as if the old war had started again.

Day dawns in a mist. A veil hides the inner reality of Ypres, and as a visitor says—"It looks more picturesque in the mist." Ypres however is an altar to which the nation must return.

After the great battle most of the survivors marched away. New men took their places. Glorious captains received their D.S.O.'s, battalions their first honours. A mere thirty thousand of the old army had stemmed the onrush of a quarter of a million of the enemy. Ypres remained in British hands—though badly battered,

and the Germans were kept back from the vital ground of Calais.

At Chateau Wood near Hooge where a placard now says "THIS PLACE WAS HOOGE" were the remains of many battalions—Grenadiers, Duke of Wellingtons, Scots Fusiliers; along the Menin road lay Scots Guards, Borders, Gordons; but all were withdrawn. The Scots marched then to Dickebusch and Locre and Bailleul, and then to Sailly sur la Lys, and were out of the battle line ten murky days at least.

Now as you walk out from Ypres along the blighted Dickebusch road midst the iron thorn bushes of rusty barbed wire and sheaves of old spiral stakes you still see large notices that WASTE LENGTHENS THE WAR—what stronger appeal could one make! Does it not still prolong it and ever will!

A south wind blows volumes of rain out of the clouds on Kemmel Hill, the old mud is restored on the road, and long plashy pools of water guide the steps. Dickebusch is getting itself dug out of the mud, and making fair progress. Of its church amid broken monuments only two needles of up-jutting wall remain—at altar and entrance. New La Clytte is soldering itself to the foundations of old La Clytte. Kemmel grows nearer to the view and all the detail of its hillside can be picked out by the eye—the wheat field, the pasture, the farm-house. It is one's eye-neighbour on the

left as you march into Locre. Now the Locre church, unscathed in 1914, unthreatened, is but a heap of red rubble surmounted by eight beams pointing skyward. Men are digging among the bricks, uncovering soiled images, figures of the Virgin, altar cloths, banners, stools. Near by stands a rusty cast-iron church built of salvage, a straight Protestant meeting house but for some brand-new coloured effigies of saints set among the seats. One aspect of Locre is of a diminutive forest of stinging nettles and low stumps of dead trees, and beyond lie some hundreds of British dead, flanked by a disused medical shed where the bodies used to be brought out and a burying padre with clayey hands went through the painfully mechanical service of throwing "dust to dust." The graves are nicely kept, and the young Belgium of Locre grows up with this heritage of sacrifice. As you sit on the ruins of the church looking down to the wet highway muddy velocipedists come pelting past in a race round their native land. Their bare thighs are caked with brown mud, and their cotton chemises are stuck to their bare round-shouldered backs, their intent faces are dirt-covered—on they dash, a complete and happy irrelevance beside the old war.

Here is the frontier 'twixt Belgium and France. A rope is drawn across the road; there was none in the days of the war. The customs gendarmes will examine you if you are coming into Belgium,

though they will pay little attention if you are going out.

The landscape is one of black dead trees hanging dead arms. Old blown-up trees lie, root and all, along the roadside. There are great numbers of sockets of old gas-shells relating to the taking of Locre by the Germans in April 1918, heaps also of rusty rifle grenades which seem to have been collected and put by the side of the road. Remarkable ever are the promiscuously piled mountains of domestic old iron which one passes. It would be an interesting exercise for a young detective to decide what each piece of wreckage had been before the war. Certain things you can be sure about however—oil-drums, coal-scuttles, wash-bowls, chamber conveniences, armchair and sofa springs, metal guts of mattresses, perforated bowls for straining greens, coffee-pots, mangling and washing machines, scales, canisters, salvers—a clean sweep for every farmhouse and every village. And in the new houses there is scarcely one saved utensil carried forward. Among the new articles introduced one may remark china casts of Charlie Chaplin in gala attire.

The frontier land is hilly. One skirts the upland of which Mount Kemmel on the left is the most prominent feature. It is three or four kilometres from the rope of the frontier to the French line of douane and its customs-gendarmes. One looks down to the first town in France,

Bailleul, and it looks like a picture which someone has drawn and then crossed out with black lines and smudged. As one approaches, this is found to be the residential suburb or park called L'asile, with grandiose buildings, now an appalling wreck with not one redeeming new patch upon it. Heaps of debris stand higher than houses, and houses which have not fallen have as it were been pushed forward upon one another. The frontier gendarmes examine your passport and you are free in France. You see the first diminutive huts of the French returned refugees, and then in the mud of the street, urchins playing bat and ball with a slowly-expiring frog which they hold by one dangling leg, and toss to the boy with the bat. A few steps further and it is Bailleul.

Bailleul too is a great wreck as remarkable as Ypres, and its progress of recuperation is much slower. It does not cater for war pilgrims or take the money of tourists, and so there are no prominent hotels and few estaminets. Most of its houses are down, its ways are choked with ruin, and in the evening nondescript squads of workmen shuffle through the streets to their homes in barracks and cellar.

Still the old Army of 1914 marches on. When it entered Bailleul all was calm. Its great red-brick houses stood fairly and uncracked. The

people had had a fright, but they held on. They held on through years of the war, and though the guns kept pounding away at them they did not wholly abandon it till 1918 when the Germans seized the town as part fruit of their second great Spring attempt to end the war. Then it was "fort abimée." The owners all fled, and what they left an enemy army ransacked.

Thousands of officers and men were snugly billeted in November 1914 at Locre and Bailleul and Meteren. Sir John French came and chatted with men in the billets—about the battle of Ypres. New drafts came out from England. There had been a clearance of reservists and first volunteers. Each stricken battalion received its half a thousand to make up. Practically new units were organised for the winter defence of the new lines, and when the time was come they marched three leagues nearer to their enemy—to Sailly sur la Lys and Laventie and Neuf Berquin, Estaires—such names of destiny! When the King came to Sailly sur la Lys at the end of November he could not see his guardsmen because they were already in the fighting line and it was thought it would be unsoldierly to call them back for the King to see, to which the King agreed.

The flowers are withered, the thistles which gave their fragrance to the air at Ypres are white with down. Peasants everywhere are scything weeds and burning them in smoking heaps. But

the trenches beyond Sailly are still shaggy-topped with teazle crowns and woolly nettle heads. One wonders how many different units at what different times occupied those 1914 trenches. Here still, one picks up old blue water-bottles and faded green straps and pouches of British uniforms. They are poor trenches—the mere staves that lined them to keep up the mud are all warped and good dug-outs are few.

The Germans of course swept o'er all this in 1918. Witness the "busted" concrete telegraph posts growing dozens of rusty iron wires from their stumps, witness the lumpy solid cement-bags by the side of the road. But between 1914 and 1918 what a history! A little way beyond the British line is a cemetery called "V.C. corner." There are two hundred and thirty crosses and on every cross is exactly the same legend—"G.R.U. Unknown Australian soldier." There is no name in the whole of the cemetery. Some time some band of Australians charged here and did not come back and were not taken prisoner. Old rifles with broken rusty bayonets have been placed against the white-washed cross-surmounted entrance. Not many paces on one comes to the German line wrought in impregnable concrete, a line of snug beds in which it seems one might comfortably await the Last Day. But one concrete structure has been mined and looks as if it had been thrown bodily into the air without flying into

bits. Now it stands poised upside down on a heap of dirt beside a profound pit. The Germans who were there when that happened are nearer now to the unknown Australian soldiers than we are.

In 1914 there was none of this concrete. Both sides were equal in the mud, and the same no-man's land lay between. Even the wire had not been thrown out—or was of a most rudimentary kind. Friend and foe heard one another talking from across the wet fields—even called to one another and were without especial bitterness. On the right and towards Laventie a nervous Indian division kept up a heavy rifle fire all night long, but otherwise the war was mild. Frost-bite harmed more than iron. The first night raids were planned—sporting expeditions in which the thrills were sufficiently novel. Pleasantries were often exchanged with the enemy who was found to be possessed of plenty of English slang, and occasionally an English soldier who knew some German risked being thought a spy by his comrades and replied.

Someone however planned a sharp attack on Lille. It was really the predecessor of the battle of Neuve Chapelle and should be called perhaps the battle of Fromelles. But it was completely abortive and the details were removed from public news—the first and last night attack of its kind. The date was exactly one week before Christmas, and looking at that narrow strip of no-man's land

in which the attack spent itself one realises afresh how ineffectual were all these little battles of the war. Men died: that was all their effect.

The attack was timed to start at six in the evening. Men were hoisted to the parapets and lay flat awaiting a signal, the blowing of a whistle. At the sound of the whistle they stood up and walked slowly and cautiously forward not to disturb the Germans. The moment the enemy discerned them and fired they were to rush forward as one man and enter the German trenches. Some men walked hand in hand; some unfortunately lost their heads and ran forward at once. The night was black as pitch and full of the unknown. It was not long before the enemy began to fire, and men dropped rapidly, leaving the inevitable gaps and disconnections in the line. It is incredible to realise it: the affair lasted all night long, and scarcely anyone knew where anyone else was. But back and forth they ranged in that fatal width of eighty yards of no-man's land, and in one battalion alone a hundred and eighty men were lost. As was to be expected, the troops were highly complimented and medals were plentifully awarded to the heroes who survived. Lille was safe as ever. Little Fromelles, just behind the enemy lines, was safe as Lille. The dead lay in front of the German trenches, and the foe carried some of them to the graveyard at Fromelles and buried them. But seven days later, on the

Christmas Day armistice, many still lay green on the green earth where they had fallen.

A curious day in the war—that first twenty-fifth of December. It was surely a moment of hope after great suffering and in the midst of the great anxiety. Probably all the nations engaged felt horrified by what they had done, and a sort of penitence ranged in men's minds, a belated regret that a better way than war had not been found to solve Europe's problems. By most of the private soldiers and young officers it was fervently believed that all would be over soon. And away at home there was such idealistic hope as that the soldiers on both sides might unanimously refuse to fight and that thus war might die of old age and prove that it had truly been an anachronism. Immense new armies were drilling in England, France, Germany, Russia, but they would never be needed. Germany would speedily be forced back to the Rhine and would capitulate, indemnifying France and Belgium handsomely and owning herself in the wrong. Our armies held the Germans on the West and the enemy was short of shells. The Russian "steam-roller" was at work on the other side of Europe, and men were betting one another that Przemysl would fall before the New Year. Germany also was short of food, and our sea power would cause her to starve. In Germany on the other hand, a sense of great military superiority prompted the

thought that soon all the enemies of the Fatherland would be crushed.

Despite the details of atrocities on both sides there was not the extent of international bitterness that existed later. There was much talk of an armistice, and there would have been official sanction for a general temporary peace if Germany had not been so deeply distrusted. As it was, there was a cessation of hostilities in many parts of the line and meetings of enemies which amounted to fraternisation. This first Christmas was the only one on which there was innocent and bloodless armistice. Next year men were killed; and in 1916 despite the hopes of rank and file there were few handshakes, few interchanges of civility and greeting.

But the first Christmas Day was a holiday. A party of Germans came over from Fromelles and a party of ours went over to the German trenches. Here in this narrow no-man's land where but a week ago had been that "clash by night," foes met as friends. The Germans agreed to bring over those of the dead which had not been buried. This was a matter of great solemnity. The grey German soldiers put the bodies on stretchers and brought them to the midst of no-man's land. Graves were dug there and then. Detachments of British and German troops formed up in line, and a German and an English chaplain read prayers alternately in the two languages. It must have

been heart-rending for our fellows to look on the faces of the dead they knew so well, some of whom had set out for the attack in such high spirits. And they lay with their terrible wounds, the silent and ghastly fruits of the war, and it seemed they had nothing in common with Christmas and the festival of peace and goodwill.

The arrangements for the armistice had been made in this way. On the night of Christmas Eve the German trenches were lit up with lanterns and there was much singing of carols and popular German music. Now and then there would be shouting across at the British lines, Christmas wishes and attempts to enter into conversation. Early on Christmas morning one of our scouts went out accordingly and met a German patrol. The latter gave him a glass of whisky and some cigars with a message that if we didn't fire at them they wouldn't fire at us. There had been no firing since nightfall and an armistice was agreed to. At about dawn a party of Germans came over to our wire fence and a party of our men went out to meet them. The meeting was most friendly, and there was a general exchange of small souvenirs and much mirth. Out of their abundance our men gave the Germans of their Christmas puddings which were received with great appreciation. Cigarettes were smoked, and there was much conversation in which Tommy made himself understood and the German mustered all

his English. They all said they were tired of the war but were convinced Germany would soon win. One or two had lived in England, one even had an English wife, another had had an English sweetheart in Suffolk, and these were very eager to get back, so they said. The German opinion about the war was that France was on her last legs; Russia had had a tremendous defeat in Poland and would soon be ready to make peace. England remained to be broken, but with France and Russia out of the way it would not be difficult to come to terms. They thought the war might come to an end in January, 1915, in the following month. They professed to hate their officers but were evidently afraid of them. It was clear that discipline was carried further in the German army than in ours and that it was very much harsher.

The German officers, without tokens of rank, seemed much less at ease than their men and were inclined to observe a sort of official silence. One pointed to the dead and said in French "Les braves!" indicating a reverence for fallen foes. Another volunteered the information that the officers who had died a week ago had been buried in the graveyard at Fromelles. There were dignified exchanges of tokens of remembrance among officers—not very convincing perhaps as evidence of brotherly love, but there was no mistaking the good-humour and camaraderie of rank and file which continued all the while.

What a sad moment when officers saluted and the men marched back to continue the bitterness and folly of Europe's suicide. And *feu de joie* at midnight and massed choruses of carol singing! Christmas 1914 how far away wert thou from happiness and peace!

And Fromelles church on the hill has been rased to the ground. The English dead have been taken away—only French remain, and amidst the great smash-up of tombstones are seven or eight wooden crosses for Chasseurs Alpins and French dragoons.

So 1914 passed and the new year opened with a long war penitence when in two months a battalion in the line lost but four or five men. Both sides were short of shells and were saving themselves for the Spring. We shall march soon to Neuve Chapelle. Meanwhile men are practising in the use of the jam-tin and the hair-brush bombs —for the British army went to war without a bomb, despised bombs. It went also without helmets, without metal hats. Men went to war in service hats. It will take some maniac-(*sic*) patriot to jump from the gallery of the House of Commons into the midst of dreaming politicians, yelling "Give them metal helmets" ere something of the kind be furnished. There are now proceeding rehearsals of a battle behind the lines. Neuve Chapelle is being thoroughly rehearsed against a dummy foe. The power of shrapnel to

destroy barbed wire is being tried—the verdict being that the narrower the front attacked the more chance of completely destroying the wire. As the war was eventually decided on the broadest of fronts, so the new phase of the war which started with Neuve Chapelle was begun on the narrowest of fronts. Be it noted, a continuation of the grand strategic movements of 1914 has already been rendered impracticable by the organisation of trench defences.

On March 10th was the first concentration on the enemy's line, the first attempt to pierce it. Behold the once crowded breastworks on the road to Aubers and Neuve Chapelle. The great shaggy earthwork is covered with dense thistle now. There are mounds of filled sandbags all hanging in clots like shirt-tails of innumerable men. This was the jumping-off point for the attack. It was bristling with tense excited soldiers that wild March morning, but no one lives there now—only swarms of whispering grasshoppers. The earth-wave goes on across the flat country; it is uncontrollably wild, and the peasants who work on the fields before and in front of it have left it alone as a work of despair to clear. It looks like an old Roman line.

It is pitiful and pathetic now to walk to Neuve Chapelle and Aubers—where officers clutched their revolvers, and men with bayonets fixed thought their last thoughts of home whilst they plunged perchance to death. All the German defences are

in concrete—the wonderful 1916 concrete, massive, impregnable. At Aubers there are six hundred and eighty block-houses of concrete, with walls three feet thick. There are impudent watch-towers of it.

The roadway, still littered with shrapnel and fragments of rifles and bombs, crawls across disintegrated Nature to ramshackle Neuve Chapelle, and then there is that beautiful wood beyond, so often sketched, not dead, leafing from all its trunks. As one looks on its lacework of loveliness set against the sky one thinks of a martyr whose faith has been proved—rescued from fire in time to avert destruction.

Neuve Chapelle however was no victory as also it was no defeat. GOOD NEWS TO-NIGHT said the placards of the London papers, but what had happened was merely a rehearsal with many accidents. The fighting lasted three days. The enemy gave as much as he took. Men spent the night in trenches waist-deep in water, and were shelled mercilessly. They got up prematurely to attack; to face fires of execution—the serried array of the enemy's machine gunnery. Did not a battalion of Guards lose three officers and a hundred men whilst speeding over a mere hundred and fifty yards? On the other hand certainly German positions were isolated and hundreds of foemen walked demurely into captivity behind the British lines.

The Challenge of the Dead

You will look in vain for the graves of thousands of heroes. The bodies have been taken far away, but Neuve Chapelle has its cemetery of exhumés covered with brown level-raked earth behind a fertile beanfield. Captain Sir Edward Hulse, hero of a night raid at Fromelles, lies buried by the wayside, and he died at Neuve Chapelle. As for German dead, there is a strange absence of graves, but beyond Neuve Chapelle is a field of outrageous thistles and broad-bladed rotting crosses, some down, some standing, all with faded inscriptions, but the thistles are so thick and high one might easily pass by without observing an old graveyard of our dread enemy. It would be interesting to read a German account, oh, not an official one, of this battle of Neuve Chapelle, an account by one of the common soldiers who fraternised with his enemy on Christmas Day and had to kill him ere Easter had arrived.

A long black touring-car has drawn up at the side of the road at Neuve Chapelle, and a handsome grey-haired English gentleman looks on the ruins. Says a small boy to him, "Daddy, what did the Germans do here?"

"I don't know, my boy," says he. "But there was a great battle here early in the war, and we tried to win it. I don't think anybody won."

So the Army went back to its football leagues and boxing competitions which afforded a happy

subsidiary interest. True, some of the athletes and bright particular sporting stars had fallen, but others constantly arrived from inexhaustible old England. As regards the war a rigorous optimism set in. Complete victory was postponed for two months. There must be more and better rehearsals, that was all. A passion for discipline and the shooting of cowards set in. Poor R—— was shot beside Laventie. Sergeant-majors "came into their own."

Now however a new peace has settled upon Laventie. Even the workmen seem working quietly. Most of the old billets of 1914-15 lie in tumultuous heaps of brick dust and beams, though here and there are houses with the number of the billet marked and the number of men it would hold. Many a tap-room where our fellows gave voice to beer and *vin blanc* has passed into nothingness—the heavy boots clattering under the tables, the red faces above, the bottles and glasses, the gambling-boards, the pale-faced non-committal French women unashamed by the filth of the talk—where are they all? The old owners have gone, dead perhaps, or they found better business elsewhere. Often those who served in those taverns behind the line were not the real owners but a sort of adventurer who came in when the real people fled in panic. Tommy was the source of their profit, they plied him with beer and girls, and gave shelter to gambling sharps and got

France a bad name. Anyhow, the people you see now are a sober quiet-faced folk with a real unending gratitude and affection for the British soldier. They preserve nothing but good memories of him, and no calculations enter into their love.

The old tavern of the Blue Horse seems to be down, but the Grand Cheval Blanc still stands and other taverns of the horse—Laventie was a horse-breeding place in days gone by. To-day it has only a tiny population—and is nothing. It perhaps will not be a notable place again.

The mind goes on to the rest-billets of Hinges and Busnes and to the march to Festubert across a country less scarred by war than there, less gassed perhaps, for gas killed more than shells. There are new plans of battle, more auguries of complete victory. Brigadiers themselves come to lesser commanders to explain in person the secrets of the Festubert attack. It amounts to little more than an intensification of the bombardment rehearsed at Neuve Chapelle, and the pouring of a greater number of men through the neck of devastation thus made, a pitiful suicide trap as it turned out, but a natural experiment.

Hinges, though in 1915 far enough from shell fire to be a place of rest-billets and the drilling of new drafts and the bringing of musketry practice up to high regimental standards, is now a wreck, its church as completely ruined as our Wenlock Abbey and looking not unlike it.

Hinges has a commanding position with a view far o'er the stricken *Nord du France*. Behind its ridge of high land Bethune remained comparatively immune, its centre alone being utterly destroyed. No doubt parts of Bethune would have fallen into German hands in 1918 had Hinges not held. The neighbouring village of Locon fell—a mile or so to the North-east. Merville which is due North fell also, and shells from three sides screamed against this little village and the Canadians defending it.

Hinges now is quietly rebuilding itself and is a little-visited war hamlet. A memory and shrine of the Festubert fight is the wayside cemetery with its Gordons and Black Watch and Lancs men. Here lie two unknown British soldiers of Lancashire regiments and on their temporary wooden crosses have been nailed metal discs of the Lancastrians with bright red roses and the words :—" They win or die who wear the rose of Lancashire." Some devotee of his county has placed this disc on thousands of the graves of the Lancastrians.

On the evening of the 15th May 1915, 2nd and 6th Gordons, 1st Grenadiers, 2nd Scots and Borders marched out to the junction of the roads rue de Bois and rue de l'Epinette, then filed through trenches held by Indian troops, and reached an allotted storming position west of "Princes Road." An elaborate time-table had

been arranged, and each unit knew its angle relative to the "gap in the wire" which the artillery were going to make. At midnight all the troops were in position. At a quarter past three in the morning Scots Guards and Borders started up to lead the assault. What a narrow-fronted concentrated effort it was may be judged by the battalion formation, which was in eight lines of two platoons each.

One cannot be sure now what trenches each unit filled, but the trenches are there and it is not difficult to imagine the crush of khaki in the warm May night, the shrieking and thundering of the bombardment. Three o'clock in the morning and the rum being doled out and the men poised and ready for the race of death.

Near the corner of rue de l'Epinette and just before the village of Richebourg l'Avoué lie three Colonels and a Major side by side—they are the commanders of the Grenadiers and of the 2nd Border regiment, Major Kennet the second in command of the 1st Grenadiers, and Colonel Alexander of a Yorkshire regiment—all four perished at Festubert. The corner of rue de l'Epinette has now a cottage of wood and bricks with a cast-iron roof, a bright garden of flowers and beans. Opposite stands a new estaminet. There is a jolly field of gathered haricots hanging to dry on ten-foot poles. Once more, iron thornbushes of barbed wire each side of the way, and

where the men dug themselves in by the side of the road—water and reeds. The Indian section has become the Indian cemetery, and the brave dusky boys of Asian hills have passed away. Festubert is a little little place where the pile of old white stone and cement which was the village church is higher than the huts which have sprung up around it. But where are those blossoming orchards through which our boys charged in the dawn twilight, where are the dead who lay so long unrecovered in that pitiful no-man's land beyond? Unrecovered then and irrecoverable now.

On the 27th May 1915, ten days after the battle, General Joffre inspected the whole Seventh Division, which was drawn up in three great columns, a brigade in each, and with the 20th Brigade and its pipers leading, all marched past to the salute. Another day came the Divisional Commander General Gough, and perched high up on the central pile of straw and midden in a large farm-yard he thanked the men for Festubert—they had done what was asked and more—"as always," he added.

Yet the Seventh Division had been destroyed at the First battle of Ypres, only its framework had remained; its large reinforcements had been worked off in the night-raids and at Neuve Chapelle, and its second reinforcements had been almost exhausted at this Festubert. The speeches

were made, not so much to the heroes as to new drafts. Kitchener's army was however flooding into France, and despite enormous casualties we were beginning in a way to have a national army. What was left of the old army became the instructors of the new. The regular army gave way to the volunteers.

It was a time of heart-searching in England. Optimism and pessimism began to be sharply defined. Russia had been routed. Lord Northcliffe made his sensational effort to make an easy-going London face bitter reality. Mr. Lloyd George at the Ministry of Munitions began to take a larger broader view of the military aspect of the war than did most of his colleagues. Preparations were made for the manufacture of shells for the terrific onslaught of the Somme next year. Whilst many poor fools still thought that 1915 would see us through the strife, plans on the basis of a three or four years struggle were being definitely made. Then we were beginning to manufacture poison gas and had at last invented a handy bomb—the Mills grenade, our answer to the stick-bombs which dangled from the belts of German soldiers. It was a time of far-reaching military plans and dreams. All grown-up children who were not themselves tin soldiers were playing soldiers. Flying men carried terror across the skies, and sailors of submarines carried it under the sea. No prophet knew the number of men

who would have to be killed before the politicians would be ready to come to Versailles to discuss the matter. From England, France and Germany three or four million must actually die—that fact was unknown. In the summer of 1915 the number who had died was far from that figure. It is curious however to think of the many who had laid themselves down in earth's earthy bed in the full faith that their sacrifice would not be in vain —to think of the proud Germans, the fine ones, not the base ones, who believed in their Kaiser and that wonderful German Fatherland to which they owed their life before they owed their death, and to think of what was to come. Germany and her Kaiser not only defeated but humiliated and cast lower than all nations in old Europe; to think of the loyal Russian soldiers who perished in the first enthusiasm of the war with a bright starry faith in Russia, her Church and her Tsar, of the Grand Duke Oleg for instance, that young hero whose warm blood grew cold whilst the street-bred people of Berlin knocked nails in great Hindenburg's wooden statue—to think of these first Russians who lay dead with their weapons beside them in 1914-15, and then to think of the hideous revolution and those murders in Ekaterinburg when all Russia fell; to think of the fine youth of England and Scotland, of France, of Serbia, who died in the faith not only of national victory but of a victory for humanity,

the boys whose fragment of iron destiny clove their brains or rived their hearts at the outset of the fray, and then to think of that sordid clash of selfishness at Versailles and of the untamed menagerie of Europe let loose in 1920. The spiritualists quickly claimed to get special messages from the dead. But did the dead only speak to the spiritualists? Did they say nothing more than was said to them? Most of us alas, hear nothing or only a "Dinna ye hear it?" a wailing of the pipes at an infinite number of poor soldiers' funerals.

Well, the war enters a new phase in the summer of 1915. It will be fought in a larger more terrible way, the number of millions of deaths will begin after a while to seem not so far off. Killing becomes the religion of the hour.

The first hundreds of thousands of the volunteers roll up. The old Seventh Division which we have been following is broken up and reconstructed. The Guards Division was formed. So Scots Guards and Grenadiers marched away to join new comrades, to leave behind brave Borders and Gordons and Devons and Duke of Wellingtons. The 92nd feted the Scots, the Devons the Grenadiers; the Gordon pipers played all the laments of the clans and "*Will ye no come back again!*"

And they went to Wizernes to prepare for

the battle of Loos—a conflict which the gallant Highland lads were destined to enter first and the bright polished Guards but second, yet both to shine and die.

In June General Foch's Tenth Army launched its Artois attack against the great ridge of "Notre Dame de Lorette" which commands the Lens country from the South as the high ground of Loos does from the North. A hundred thousand Frenchmen perished for Notre Dame and it is henceforth a place of pilgrimage for France. The battle was the prelude to our battle of Loos and whilst the great new British army in reserve drilled and marched away to the North, it heard each night the drum-fire of the 75's rolling from the South. Later in the war when the British took over all the line 'twixt Lens and Arras the Canadians took Foch's victory a step further and captured Vimy Ridge. What Foch did in the summer of '15 was however to be eclipsed by what the combined armies should do in the autumn. Reliance was placed chiefly on the new man-power. The earlier battles of Neuve Chapelle and Festubert had been tests of the relationship of gun-power and man-power. Opinion inclined to support the theory that a superiority in numbers was the most telling factor in a battle. This seemingly was disproved, and the next theory was that in order to obtain victory there must be overwhelming superiority both in

guns and in men. The Somme battle proved that even these were not enough.

In the battle of Loos however all the interest was centred on men, men personally. The new base was St. Omer, the picturesque ecclesiastical town with its castellated church towers in relief against the sky—all so thronged with khaki—henceforth till the war ends to be a great war centre. France lies in a bower beyond, and there are squads of poplar trees on hills, and green and happy meadows never scarred by shells or wilted by gas. On the left on the road out to Wizernes is now a large cemetery, and here lie French dead with the tricolour upon them, British with an infinity of flowers and wreaths, Americans with grim and tall white crosses—American dead who will not be exhumed perhaps. Behind the American graves stand wedges of unpainted wood —a Chinese plot where lie what was mortal of many unknown coolies. On the right lie Germans, on the left *soldados* of Portugal. This is called playfully the souvenir cemetery—there are so many of the dead they can be thus arranged, as children might arrange their toys. St. Omer was known as a great base hospital to which alas, so many were called to look their last upon their dying children, dying sons of England breathing out their last words before their bodies were laid away. There are those who are fond of saying that everything began at St. Omer. But for

many also it was the place where it all—*ended.*

The cemetery past, (How it rains on it now!) you come to aerodromes all tortured and torn, indications of Handley Page but no indications of those who fly, the cages are all empty and there stands not a sentry. In plain blunt English the passer-by is told that "*Trespassers will be shot*" but in the heavy rain of a Saturday afternoon a muddy crowd of French boys are playing a football match. Chinamen evidently worked beside these aerodromes, for you see their scrawls on the sheds and shelters.

Wizernes, where the Guards Division was formed, lies in a hollow below a long green ridge. Most of it is painted white—including *Au bon Diable* a tavern of some name. The people know a passing Englishman, not by the cut of his clothes alone but by his walk and his complexion and style. Standing at their doorways old men give military salutes to any Englishman who happens to go by. All know bits of our tongue, of which they are as proud as if they had wounds to show. A poor woman in a little beer-house has eight daughters, five of whom are married and a sixth has a child by a Canadian. Little Renée, flaxen-haired, ruddy-cheeked, is getting on very well and the mother adores her, though a father in the New World his progeny has forgotten. This sixth daughter of substantial mother was in

service at Havre and met the soldier there; she is now in service at St. Omer and not at all "ruined." There are thousands of baby tokens of the war in France. Some died no doubt, through lack of care; lightly they came and lightly they go, but a widespread sentimental feeling about departed Tommy shields those who now live from any feeling of disgrace.

Of course the men at the base begot more infants than the men in the line, the latter were too much used up for "love" or "lust," saw fewer girls and had less time on their hands. But all had their opportunities. As we know, a great number of marriages were effected, and not a few overseas men are now living with French wives.

That has little however to do with Wizernes, whence behold Lord Cavan's men marching away one dull September morn. The music of the bands is refracted from that long parallel ridge of hill which goes with the road toward Arques—the drums, the fifes, the brilliant array; each company compact, glittering—the new Division. Some of it is utterly new, such as 4th Grenadiers and 1st Welsh straight from Little Sparta, others trail already a great war history from other divisions of the old army. But the numbers are good. Sergeants are yelling at men who will be dead in a few weeks' time. Men are silently reviling those on whom destiny itself will quickly

take revenge. All looks very authentic and lasting. Unchecked optimism moreover reigns supreme. These compact units in their unhurried and ever regular quick march believe that they will win the war. Lens will be taken by others. They will come into action at the critical moment, somewhere near Douai. They will pierce the German belt of defence, split the enemy army, "roll up their line," and Germany realising that she is beaten will at once sue for peace. There may be some delay in formalities—then home for Christmas!

Behold in the Grand Place at Arques immaculate General Heywood inspecting his Third Brigade with its new units. Arques has a tall obelisk there now—*a ses cent cinquante heroiques et glorieux enfants, mort pour la France et la liberté.*

These inspections were as great an ordeal as the going into battle itself. In the line at least there were no drill-sergeants and regimental sergeant-majors. However, inspections cease and the long march in the rain begins, and new leather beats cobbled highways for many a long fifty minutes, and weary backs and feet find ten minutes in the hour all too little for recuperation. A little-touched happy agricultural country, with Calvaries here and there erected and blessed in 1919 in token of thanks that the land was spared from invasion. By Aire to Fontaine St. Hilaire,

to the sight of the first coal pyramids of the Lens country and to the hearing of the first mighty thunders of the opening great battle. The Guards were told that they were intended for a sort of anchor to the cavalry. The Division would press on, and somewhere beyond Loos the cavalry would come up from behind, pass through the ranks, and press on to Douai. The Division would perhaps come into action at the Canal at Douai. So when the cavalry overtook the Guards whilst yet on the road to Loos it was assumed that the whole British army was in advance of its program, Douai taken, and the enemy in disorderly retreat. But on the day when optimism reached its height a Colonel in a motor coming back from the front gave the duller tidings that the attack had been held up. However, the sight of the cavalry regiments going past in all their splendour was a sort of lasting encouragement in the simple soldier's mind.

It is a gloomy sordid country with dirty mining villages placarded with yellow appeals to the proletariat and "Vive la Russie!" "Vive la revolution sociale!" and dirty homes and black-faced men in sooty coaly shirts—miserable Sailly, miserable Vermelles. Then the road debouches upon wide open country, the terrain and the landscape of the battle. It is a chalky heath interlaced and inter-run with trenches and barbed wire. The trenches were mostly dug by Scottish

miners and were said to be the admiration of the troops in 1915. But standards in trench digging were low in the first year of the war, and one does not admire them now. The landmarks of the horizon are peaked coal-heaps. The road which goes to Lens is bare and hard. Loos and Hulluch are on the left, and also the German line. Close in to the suburbs of Lens the line crosses the road. Shells must have come thick and fast on these September days. It is not a covetable country to march over under fire. One wonders what exactly the first divisions accomplished here on the days before the Guards came up. Special correspondents were given facilities at the time and one remembers among other things Mr. Buchan's despatch with its native pride in Highland regiments, and a sort of belief that they themselves had won the day. One had the impression of a sort of trial charge of kilted lads which showed what they would do later on. Indeed some of the Highlanders must have actually got into Lens. Nothing could stop them but death. Were the lines between Vermelles and Loos German? These were supposed to have been captured during the first days of the attack. The Guards in artillery formation swept across leftward to Loos, past the spent legions—to the line, to Hill 70, the barrier to Lens city.

It is memorable to be in Loos on the anniversary of the opening of the battle, to walk up

Hill 70 by the sharp-dug clumsy communication-trench, to reach the lateral lines on the brow of the hill and look down toward the shattered town. And Loos lies in disruption and dejection. It lost every roof, now it has perhaps a score of new ones visible to the eye. The machinery of the pit-head is all down, likewise the clangorous iron tower which shells seemed unable to destroy. Rusty wreckage runs along the base of the coal heap, the length of a long train. Heavy green shrub almost covers the coal embankment. On Hill 70 itself the old rusty wire remains, though so scanty as if much had corroded away. Shell-holes seem to afford more cover than the pitiful scrapings in the chalk of the old trenches. There is a burnt-out wood on the left; on the right is the insurgent industrialism of unruined fosses; ahead are chalk-pits, chalk-mounds, thistles, dry grass, poppies, all dazzling in a bright September noon. Innumerable grasshoppers are whispering in the breeze, and from all horizons one hears also the softened clatter of building. You can even hear what is going on in Lens.

There is little of the debris of the fight—a rotten butt-end of a rifle, a few shreds of German bombs, an old-fashioned gas bag. One recalls that the British first used gas at Loos. The air on Hill 70 on that September day was pregnant with gas. Many of our fellows died of it. The Germans on their side made much use of stick-

bombs. The hill was strewn with "buckshee" bombs. Did not a young soldier valiantly digging drive a pick through one, and send himself and Lord Petre of the Grenadiers to better country? The enemy manufactured vast quantities of this bomb—it was a pet toy of his, curiously exemplifying his mind. Its stated object was to terrify rather than to kill, and Englishmen believing more in iron and "good shrapnel effects" always despised it. But it was responsible for an enormous number of accidents.

On the brow of the hill and beyond there are increasing signs of German habitation. Near a vast white wallowing mine-crater there is a barricade of sand-bags and wire, the point of difference 'twixt friend and foe. After that one soon comes upon those wooden framed cellarways which plunge from the side of the trench into the bowels of the earth. They go down and down and are seldom explored by soldier or civilian. Some of these have their gruesome secrets in their dark depths. Many Germans were killed in them. Fear and industry conceived them. They were safe enough at ordinary times, but death-traps in an attack; a man at the bottom of a steep pit stood little chance against an enemy at the door with a bomb. The British and French in this case understood the war better than the Germans. A slighter cover or shelter whilst giving less sense of security did give vigilance and alertness.

The Challenge of the Dead

Germany dug the grave of her cause far from the ends she had in view and settled down to a war of concrete and defence when she should have understood her lines as the merest temporary abiding places on the way to victory. It prolonged the settlement for years.

How the cornflowers blossom on the German side! Did not they sow the seeds here for their Kaiser. They sowed the seed—and now it blossoms on the wilderness. Bright blue flowers shine in the midst of withered nature, otherwise in September 1920 the crest of Hill 70 is so covered with brittle yellow weeds that a match would set it aflame from end to end. It is like a dried inland beach of the old war. The waves no longer roll up with thunder and expire as once they did. But you can see in imagination the young Guards officer in his Burberry, cane in hand leading his flower of manhood—forward, forward, toward the shore of Lens—see the expiring first line and the second line that follows passing through and over it, the third that goes again—— They were the waves which at last crumbled all defences.

Not that Loos was a triumph of attack. Little justice will no doubt be done on our side to the German defence of Lens, but it was a defence which rivalled ours of Ypres. The enemy was driven back on both sides of it during the later campaigns of the war (chiefly in 1917). Technically and theoretically the Germans could be

forced to yield it at any moment. But in practice it could not be taken from them. We'd take it were it of iron; they'd hold it were it of butter. Artillery laid the town flat, but artillery could not destroy the cellars, and of every cellar the German, with the reinforcement of iron and concrete, made a machine-gun nest or post for riflemen. For the rest, we held nearly all the Vermelles—Lens road, and the greater part of that from La Bassee to Lens. From Hill 70 one sees geographically a wide landscape of the war. It was a remarkable vantage-ground for beholding the doings of one's own side.

One aspect of the fighting on Hill 70 ought not to be forgotten, and that was the work of the stretcher-bearers who for the sake of each wounded comrade they brought in exposed themselves constantly to death. The heavy bodies, the uneven and entangled way down an exposed hillside, the shells howling and bursting, the sniper's bullet whipping through the air—these made up the stretcher-bearers' Calvary-walk. They did their duty and ceased to think of whether they themselves would live or die. And Loos was nothing to the Somme—as those will tell you who came through both.

But the battle of Loos was not ended at Loos. All the worst of the fighting was away to the left by Bois de Hugo and Chalk-pit wood where Scots and Coldstream strove again and again to establish

a continuous line. The German system of trenches was entered, and Hulluch-ward, La Bassee-ward, a strife more bloody than Loos itself continued. On the night of the 29th September there is a relief on Hill 70—the 22nd Londons come in. The survivors of the Guards march off to billets in Sailly and about. But the fight continues for halves of trenches, for corners, for turnings. German and British are living in the same madhouse together and fighting for complete possession room by room.

Now the new British bomb appears—the Mills grenade, the trench-clearer. Germans are fought in the white alleys with bombs, bombs only and bombs ever. October 1915 was the great month of bomb-mania. Its emblem should be the man and the bomb ready to throw. The Guards were soon back in the fray, and on the night when the bombs came up so great was the fascination that "Jocks" and "Bill Browns" were bombing one another—each thinking the other was the enemy.

It is all indescribably wild now—Gun trench, Grab Alley, Big Willie, Hohenzollern and the rest, cement-coloured, or yellow with a withered prairie of weeds. Notices at various points indicate *chasse reservée:* the shooting rights are now reserved. Frenchmen with shot-guns and dogs prowl along the parapets, peppering the noisy partridges which they rouse up in scores. Decay-

ing rifles lie in the trenches, rusty bayonets, and muddy shreds of belts and pouches. On the German side the inevitable litter of unexploded but sodden bombs; undo the metal protectors and you find the very string which caused them to explode has rotted in its case. No tourists turn up on these wild wastes. It is too terrible for them—and you cannot motor over innumerable pits.

On Sunday October 3rd you can picture the survivors of Loos at "Divine Service" at Sailly la Bourse. On the evening of the Sunday they marched to Gun trench. The trench was so called because the enemy had a gun on it. Fifty yards of the centre the Germans held, and the British were in the trench both on the left and on the right of the enemy, and strove to bomb him out of it entirely.

The gun was worked heavily, and shell after shell landed on parapet or parados scattering solid slag, ravaging chalk, burying men. The unburied were engaged all night digging out lost comrades and trench-repairing. It seems mere matter-of-fact when set down in dull print—but oh, the physical agonies of apprehension, the shuddering, the shattering of nerves physically under such conditions. It is easily understood how men were glad to be hit to get away and find peace. Death must at times have been eagerly desired and sought. It was called hell: it was hell. The

new Kitchener divisions were thus not long in getting to the reality of war.

In the diaries of the time you find much reference to gas fatigue. British gas was used whenever the wind seemed favourable. Gas did not seem however to have power to stifle many enemy defenders. Gas fatigue was the carrying of the cylinders to the line. Emplacements were dug for cylinders below the parapet of the trench and "riveted" with sand-bags. Twenty or thirty cylinders would be thus ranged together at intervals of twenty-five yards. The cylinders contained the gas in liquid form, and ejection was worked on the syphon principle. This use of gas was seldom justified by results, and added an infernal torture and ugliness. It was a true diabolism. Almost always it afflicted the side which operated it as much as it did the enemy. Protection against gas was clumsy and inadequate. We started with the "stokers' pad" which was proved useless. Then we had a cotton pad soaked in hypo and tied on by veiling which was supposed to protect the eyes. And then followed cloth helmets soaked in hypo, helmets with mica eyes, very smelly, clammy, and unreliable. Mustard gas at a later date brought the respirator. But the protection at Loos and Hulluch was the old hypo bag of which not a few still lie about.

The war was becoming quite complicated and

new. A Lewis gun was first used in the battle for Hohenzollern Redoubt, and in time each battalion, nay, each company, will have its Lewis gunners. Steel helmets were also issued at Hohenzollern and were considered curiosities. One battalion received five helmets! They were supposed to be for the special use of the bombers. But then everyone became a bomber in that battle.

It is with awe that one looks on the silent empty Hohenzollern system now, where trenches for many days were choked with dead. Some commanders in those days thought double rum-rations put the necessary devil into men to carry them through the ordeal of a fray, and it is common talk in the Army that some of the units that went into the storming of Hohenzollern Redoubt knew very little of what they were doing. One thing is certain: alcohol has power to banish fear from men's minds, if fear there happen to be. It dulls the brain to danger. But then alas, it often dulls it to much else. Cool heads were needed to meet the German. And the night-attack at Hohenzollern failed. The dead lay as if emptied out of sacks into the pits, into the trenches, some head downward, some with legs alone visible. Whilst it rained in London, and the evening crowds glided along Shaftesbury Avenue and Piccadilly talking of anything and everything, happily, snugly,—away out there in the darkness

lay such a scene. It was most near, but an impenetrable black curtain hid it from the eyes.

War in 1915 failed. We failed; the Germans failed. The German failure was the greater because it was not their rôle to stand and be attacked. Germans and Allies were not unequally matched. The result was a deadlock. Both sides came to the conclusion that no one in his wildest dreams of preparation for war had foreseen the number of shells and guns necessary to obtain victory. Fighting therefore slackened off in the trenches, and the real centre of war-activity was transferred to what we called "the home front," to the factories and war-industries of England, France, and Germany and Austria. All the wet and gloomy winter saw the ammunition heaping up for the myriad-fold destruction of men in 1916. Germany prepared a mountain of death to hurl at Verdun; Britain a mountain of death to hurl from the Somme. No serious discussion of the campaigns of 1915 was allowed to the peoples of the countries. Gallipoli however was evacuated and Serbia over-run, and Bulgaria came into the war on the other side. With the military power of the Tsar lying low Germany had fair hopes of victory. Neither Britain nor France had much to cheer them, but they knew that their resources were mighty, and they knew that their enemy on the Western front did not seem to want to fight and was continually on the defensive.

It did not stir the mind of the soldier much. The autumn leaves fell for the Germans, and Christmas came for the British Tommy, and unfulfilled promises in plenty. A winter of rain and mist above, and water and mud below, and a sense of "a long long way to Tipperary and to everywhere else" were the lot of the British soldier. The war lost its tension after the Hulluch fighting was over. Unofficial fraternisation set in on many fronts. This was a mutual understanding by the rank and file of both sides. The Germans were quickest in arranging it—indeed their alacrity in this direction suggested the belief that it was organised from above and was intended as a way of winning the war, by undermining discipline and worming out secrets and spying. This however was not so. For if it undermined one side it undermined the other as much also, and if one side learned secrets so could the other. Moreover officers on both sides disliked it, and they for their part could not fraternise with enemy officers. Their quarrel was more serious. Officers understood more about the war and had more of the collective guilt of the war upon their minds than had the rank and file. Not that a winter lull was not to their liking. They were glad enough of the effects of these *petites armistices*. On the French fronts more was arranged than on that held by the British. Parties came over into one another's trenches. In Russia

unfortunately fraternisation resulted in a constant loss of Muscovite rifles and material in exchange for *Schnapps*. Probably the British fraternised least of all, and though one has heard of Tommy's concert party in which "Brother 'Ans was arst ter sing the 'im of 'ate" it did not amount to more than tacit agreements not to shoot.

The crack regiments on both sides were however indisposed for any kind of truce. They set the tone in discipline and were far from that Charlie Chaplin attitude towards the war which characterised some others. What was the astonishment of some of the Guardsmen when "taking over" at Laventie, after Loos and Hohenzollern, to see the easy-going way of warfare which had developed. "I saw a Jerry on top of the enemy parapet working away in broad daylight as cool as could be," said a sergeant. "Of course I at once got a bead on him."

"What're you going to do? You're surely not going to fire on him?" asked one of the men of the outgoing regiment. "You'll spoil the game."

"How's that?"

"Why, they'll begin shooting at you."

"What d'you think of that?" said the sergeant. "I fired just to let them know the Guards had come."

Nevertheless even the Guards were mollified. Warfare dwindled to nothing. "Jerry" was very

confiding. Christmas was coming. The war after all was not so serious and perhaps would not be renewed in the Spring. Inactivity always seems to soften opposing rank and file toward one another. It tends to bring them back to the natural human relationship. By Christmas there was a widespread popular sense for a thoroughgoing reconciliation in no-man's land. What had happened at Christmas in 1914 was the needful precedent. It was a sort of playful legend in the army. On Christmas Day there would be a going over and a shaking of hands and exchange of souvenirs and drinks. Both sides looked forward to it.

But the authorities evidently thought it dangerous. Orders to the effect that there should be no fraternisation were sent out, and a staff-officer here and there spent Christmas Eve in the trenches to see that the orders were carried out. He could not however effect very much. At ten o'clock that night the men in all the trenches both German and English were talking without restraint, and the dark muddy lines of Laventie had a voice as of some great club at night when all the members are discussing at once. Germans were shouting invitations across, British were shouting invitations; and promises were made for next day. At dawn therefore parties went over, and whole battalions might have followed them had not the artillery at once set up a barrage. It

was found also that sentries on both sides had been ordered to fire. Some obeyed, some did not. One Guards sentry was proud of having fired fifteen rounds. But he did not hit anyone. Meanwhile the troops about Neuve Chapelle and Aubers got across in large bodies. Even on the Guards' front men risked their lives to shake hands. Did not one thus lose his life that morning!

There is a little old cemetery by the side of the road a mile or so from Laventie, and there lie prominently side by side two corporals of the Sixth Black Watch (Newell and Willis) and behind their graves is that of a certain Sergeant Oliver who perished on Christmas Day. A tall rose tree with crimson roses blooming even in the autumn is growing from the earth where he lies. Beside him lies one who was both captain and knight, with only a dock rising from his feet. On all graves are weeds except on that of the man who gave his life to shake hands on Christmas Day.

The winter life of 1915-16 was one of mud and frostbite in the line, and taverns and songs when out. The whole corner of Northern France about Armentières begot a sort of British character. Not that it was like any district at home. Or that the way of life resembled anything anywhere else at any time. Tommy in the *estaminet*, Tommy with his sing-song in billets, Tommy on

the march slogging through the mud—began as it were to belong to France and to the war. He ceased to look like an imported article. He was disposed to be at home, and like Mark Tapley, that most characteristic of English types of men, to be happy even under the most melancholy circumstances. The soldier, whatever his inward sorrows, often so deep, so poignant, always kept a cheery face and had a devil-may-care smile for whatever came along. Of course he had his grousing fits. But they passed. He was most himself when singing. To France he sang all the old songs he ever knew and more besides which he invented. How vulgar, in London how banal were the songs—" vulgar songs which make you cough and blow your nose " as Kipling put it, the seemingly maudlin *Hullo my dearie I want you to-night* sort of song. But in France how real, how passionate! A group of men stand in the partial shelter of a shattered building crooning together whilst it rains, whilst it pours on the mud outside! In England the words which they sing are sentimental drivel, they are the barrel-organ and its handle turning, but in France they are the voice of a suppressed yearning and suffering—

I . . shall meet you . . to-night, dear—
In my beautee . . ful dream . . land.
And your eyes will be bright, dear,
With . . the love light . . that shines for me.

The only place where the soldier could meet her, till there came one of those madly-coveted greedily-snatched moments of leave, when a man dashed, with the mud of the trenches still on him, straight to "Blighty."

There was a curious note of self-pity in many of the sentimental songs, and men gloated over the love of home. The love of mother became warmer in imagination (*Lordy, lordy lordy, how I love her!*); the tenderness of wife and sweetheart became desired in a way which could only be expressed in songs—and in letters, those most precious of all tokens of the war, the letters which men sent from the front to those who loved them. The little English soldier sang his very heart out asking his Lizzie to "keep the kettle boiling," asking anyone and everyone to

> Keep the home fires burning
> Till the boys come home!

Even so, he would not allow himself to get down-hearted or to remain for long in a sentimental mood. The humorous inventive vein came to his assistance. He did not possess ready-made chansonettes of the French type. The music-hall had not provided them, but he straightway began to invent them to satisfy the need. So sprang into being *Mademoiselle from Armenteers* which was reputed to have fifty thousand verses—anyone could invent a verse at any moment. So was

born *Roll on, my Three*, that soldiers' litany and chorus, *The one-eyed Riley*, and many another burlesque. Then every well-known hymn and popular song had its war parody expressing the soldier's mind in lighter vein—— Some of the parodies of popular songs improved on the originals. Thus—

> I wore a tunic, an old khaki tunic,
> But you wore civilian clothes.
> Whilst we were in the trenches
> You were mashing all the wenches,
> What a blessing no one knows!
> We fought at Loos whilst you scoffed the booze.

on the basis of—

> I wore a tulip, a bright yellow tulip,
> But you wore a red red rose.

was extremely diverting, as was

> I've lost my oil-bottle and pull-through,
> I've lost my four by two.

on the basis of "Love's beautiful garden."

Endless were these songs and parodies now fast receding into limbo. Where so much was ugly and of the burlesque there was also much that was true and simple and direct, from the heart. Perhaps the most popular song in some regiments was, after all, "Mary." There was no parody of "Mary," and one was always hearing or singing—

> The sweetest blossom on the tree
> Cannot compare with Ma . . ry!

The men lifted the roofs of the taverns with their songs. The war which increased life's suffering tenfold, increased life's music tenfold also.

So the winter was sung through, a winter of rain and snow, with low skies, with mists, mist on land and sea and in the eyes and in the mind, the melancholy interim of 1915-16, where no one understood anything except that there was suffering. Meanwhile however the munition-makers on the home fronts went on manufacturing the stuff of death in ever-increasing appalling vast quantities.

The Germans were the first to resume the struggle. 1916 presented itself as a year of destiny for Mittel-Europa and world-power. Russia lay low. Serbia was ravaged even to the shores of Greece. A galvanised Turkey had been raised from death and had driven France and Britain from the gates of the Hellespont. There remained but one vital enemy—France. Britain would soon compose the war if France were worsted. So now all the might of Prussia was forged into a weapon of assault, and the weapon was hurled in the centre.

There commenced the terrible manslaughter of Verdun. Irresistible Germany met immovable France, and men by the myriad were sent post-haste to heaven. Between the petty forts of a French city Europe heaped a great pyramid of skulls to the sky. As in Verestchagin's picture,

one saw an emblem of war without compromise and without cowardice.

The French stubbornness before Verdun shone out like a miracle. It was an unexpected revelation of French tenacity and corporate strength. A Bismarckian contempt for the Frenchman had almost been the accepted measure of the French in Europe. They were considered degenerate, corrupt, lacking in spirit, loud to boast but quick to run away. The rapidity with which Germany overran France in 1914 had confirmed this opinion, despite the battle of the Marne. But Verdun revealed to Germany a new and terrible France. The whole of the rest of the war, as it were, paused to look on in wonder. France has raised now her memorials at Verdun, but it needs no monument. Verdun is written in iron upon Europe's heart. Dead called to the living there to join them. Verdun was never taken, but it always lured the enemy on—the lodestone of the charnel house.

Rightly understood, the battle of the Somme was not a greater battle than that of Verdun. It was similar; it was our Verdun battle. It also was a "blood-bath" for both sides. It also was a spending of the ammunition which the winter, spring, and summer preparations had brought forth. Tens of thousands of those who sang so light-heartedly through the winter found eternal peace, stretched like lost star-fishes in the Somme

mud. From Albert with the Virgin leaning from the church-tower, to within sight of the miserable, hitherto uncoveted, town of Bapaume what a progress! One of the heaviest epics in history, the slowest, most heavy footed of charges! As if each man bore a hundredweight of lead on his feet to keep him back when he would have rushed to gain the day! Hundreds met their death, not through shot or shell, but by actual drowning in mud. Hundreds were sent back to the rear partially distraught before they got the signal to leap forth to personal attack. The massing of the Somme artillery out-Heroded Herod—the greatest concentration of noise and destruction that the world had known. The greatest strain of the Somme battle was mental, and its greatest effect was no doubt moral. The extent of territory gained was no indication of the true result of the battle. The actual numbers of the dead might have been a greater indication had they not generally been hidden at the time. For the peace-quorum of death was being approached—there was a large advance towards hate's *desirabilia*, the three and a half millions who had to be slain. Men might have taken some comfort from that dreadful thought had they known. But it was theirs to fight and labour on in blindness.

The Somme country was an extension of the British line. As our army doubled, trebled, quadrupled, so it multiplied the extent of France

which it defended. From the flats of Flanders and Northern France we gradually progressed to a more diversified country of long ridges and downs, pleasanter in peace but equally terrible in war. As you approach it now by train the cemeteries roll into view on every hand. The dead are as it were drawn up in solid columns to greet you as you pass, as it were one live man were monarch o'er all the dead. The Army that went to guard the line is still there, still on duty—in Plot A, Plot B, Plot C, Plot Z, of multitudinous war-cemeteries marked now by map-references. The dead challenge the living in choruses of silence from broad fields of burial. The hills remain like great mounds in the mist, the same bare ridges of Cæsar's wars two thousand years ago, the same o'er which perchance mankind will climb to death as many centuries hence, antediluvian hummocks of old earth, somnolent, green, indifferent. Earth suggests itself constantly as something mightier than man. It is not the prostrate earth of Ypres Salient, but one which war has much less power to sear. Man's habitations and cities topple down, forests are fired away, but the elemental lines and contours of the hills remain unbroken and as it were indifferent both to time and history. These rivers too, by which men name their battles, flow on, flow away without a conscious memory even of a yesterday. The innocence of the Somme, the

virginity of the Ancre, these have overcome all hate and blood, and lightly forgotten them.

The Judas trees have leafed afresh upon the banks of Ancre, and every individual leaf is chattering and shivering—because, they say, two thousand years ago the betrayer hanged himself upon an aspen bough. The aspens give voice to the wind, and beside them the little willows are all silent. Tangled wild flowers cling to the river banks, and limpid water passes in bright armfuls over green sedgy tresses. On either hand the giant reeds lift their pompous heads. Shell-pits are pits of greenery. Deep brown of sagging rusty wire seems to be the complementary colour of an intense and shadowy green. In the road where the sentry stood guarding the crossing of the rail all is empty now. No dust-covered mud-splashed lorries come blundering and tearing along the high-road any more. There is a silence which is unearthly, as if the composed deep sleep of the dead had conquered the ways of the living. The little white towns and villages lie splashed in wreckage—without the power to lift themselves again. Your Ville sur Corbie, your Meault with its dirt-choked green strewn with pontoon boats, your Fricourt and Carnoy—all prostrate, inert—they lie on the ground as if sewn to it. On the left comes into view the triple blackness of the silhouette of Notre Dame at Albert. Trees with the horror of the martyrs on their receding

withered hands seem fixed for years in the momentary awfulness of death, menacing, aghast, uprearing. Narrow crooked trenches in disorderly array seem to be hurrying forward, carrying their old wire with them—as if they too had to follow the men they once held. But they pause on the shores of dreadful pools and ponds, dead-horse and dead-men stagnancies that ponder and are still and reflect indifferently the grey sky above and the grey, blasted, shattered timber-bits on either hand.

Oh Albert, what a place of death thou art now, with thy returned children playing hide and seek around the heaps of thy homes. How is it possible to *return* to this place. It is not a return: no one can ever return to the Albert of 1914. These that we see are revenants come to look at spectral homes. For Albert is dead. There you can realise that a human home is a living being like the woman who made it. It can prosper or decay. It can go shabby and suffer. It can be wounded or maimed—it can be killed. We mercifully hide our dead in Earth's great bosom—but we leave our dead homes long when they lie, in all their horror and terror. There stands a shrunken little house where the tiles have been swept away, the plaster also, and the bare laths of the ceiling are all exposed, but they look like a cap bashed down on the head of a dead man. Yonder lies a recumbent habitation with a welter of grey laths

and beams on its burst-out side, like the sun-dried ribs of a dead dromedary. Beyond it stands a wall that is left, and then an outraged home with madness fixed in its visage in the moment of death-agony. Here is a house with gutted entrails half congealed and terrible to behold. There is a house that died simply of shock. But its neighbour *vis-à-vis* was hit by some striding giant with iron fist. Rows of houses are seen cowering, as if they had had their hands up trying to ward off the dreadful fate which stalked above them. Houses lie killed as it were in the action of flight, veritably in the act of treading on one another's heels in a frenzy to get away. There are houses which are abased, houses which have fallen foremost on their faces, houses which have fallen backwards, bottom over top into confusion and debris behind, houses with their sides torn off as men's sides were torn off in the war, exposing for one instant beating hearts. There are houses where simply the life-breath has gone out—dead, blind, empty and desolate.

One can hardly think of the existence once of rooms, the marriage-bedrooms of sweet human honeymoons, the room where the baby slept a baby's untroubled sleep, the children's room where one thinks of a child's cry in the night or a child's lisped prayer before its mother or the crucifix, the room where the home met, the table round which went food and talk and laughter in

a common innocence and ignorance of destiny—all gone now in shapeless ruin.

All the houses were the children of Notre Dame—the leaning Virgin who hung out from the stricken tower of the mighty masonry of the Cathedral-church, and yearned o'er the city. The miracle of her suspense in air over Albert was a never-ceasing wonder, and the soldiers said the city would never be taken as long as she remained un-shot down from the eminence of the great church.

Alas, Albert had its day of fate and of complete sacrifice ere the war should end—when all should go, yea, Virgin and all, and only Golgotha remain, Golgotha and the Roman soldiers who smote the Master with their spears as He hung from the Cross.

Twilight settles down upon the dead, the twilight of time and misery. The dreadful reality of destruction becomes more intense and real. After all, sunlight and the noonday do not always show us truth. They are in themselves so full of life and happiness that they divert attention from ruins and death unto themselves. Only in the grey light of afternoon and evening, and looking with the empty eye-socket of night-darkness can one easily apprehend what is spread out here —the last landscape of tens of thousands who lie dead. Hamlet must go to the battlements at the time when the ghost walks. The light of day

hides the unseen world, or cannot quite hide it. But there is one moment when the ghost of Albert grows into vision majestically before the eyes. You go out through the primeval jungle of dead weeds, the tripartite crowned heads of brown teasles looking like low-lying spectral regalia of the death-kingdom, past dug-outs and deeps and quagmire, past the prostrate ribaldry and obscenity of war's doings with the earth—to the dark-flowing water which nurses its forgotten secrets, flowing on, flowing on. You wait, and whilst mist chills the marrow the ghostly moment of Albert comes once more. Night has more than heralded itself; it is here in a vast-fronted army and comes onward. Demon-eyes look over the ridges, flash angrily, greedily; the roar of battle thunder bursts up; the gas-shells cat-calling across the sky fall in showers on the mud; field-guns are advanced to point-blank range—there comes the tide of the war-worn German soldiery of March 1918, war-worn and yet exultant; the English are driven out, the leaning Virgin falls, and the city is given over to the enemy. Albert is dead; even its soul has died. English soldiers will come back in August, recapture it, but not the city they defended so long, not the city of the little Notre Dame leaning passionately o'er its life and its defence.

From Albert to Bapaume, from Fricourt by Carnoy and Maricourt to Longueval and Ginchy

and Le Transloy, a pleasant day's walk now. There is the incomparable Somme silence, a silence achieved by the tremendous thunderous contrast in history, a silence from the stilled hearts of the dead, a deafness and a muteness. Then when the mist disperses, and the sun lifts his awful radiance o'er the scene, there are audible the lowly orchestras of flies and bees. The rags of horses' skeletons lie on the roadway, and beside a ruined direction-post a clean-picked horse's skull has been placed on the stump of a tree. Lifting one's eyes to the view there rolls forth to the horizon vast moors empurpled here and there and with gashes of white on wan green wastes. An organised tour by car whirls past upon the road raising phantom hosts of white dust. It will do the whole Somme campaign in an hour and bring up safely at some French hotel where hot lunch and foaming beer persuade the living that life is still worth while. There was once a picture in *Simplicissimus* of a Cook's guide showing a human skull to some tourists—

"This, sir," said he, "was a young man."

It was meant for irony. But surely it is good for everyone who talks of war to go and get that thought—*this was a young man.* It does not matter that tourists whirl past without pause in a car. Let each and everyone come and dip a corner of a handkerchief in the blood of the war —for remembrance. Come to the sacrament of

the young man's blood which was shed instead of yours.

The road you traverse to the Somme altar is the road which hundreds of thousands of young men trod, marching to moments of destiny, moments of victory; the Manchesters to Montauban, South Africans to Delville, Royal Scots to Guillemont, the Guards to Les Boeufs, the Durham Light Infantry to the Butte of Warlencourt, the 47th Londons to Eaucourt l'Abbaye—and many others; they marched from the quiet places of the homeland and the empire, from Loos, from Laventie, from Flanders; defenders of Ypres and defenders of Arras, marching with their drums, marching with their bayonets, to Britain's quarrel and her mightiest enemy. Behind them were ranged the guns, and in front of them was Prussia. Now the desolation of Nature alone suggests what a desolation there was of men. The terrible woods are impressionist pictures of the ruined vitals of great regiments, and you can hold a forest in your mind as you would a skull in your hands and say—*This was a forest. This was an army.*

The generality of men and women however will not do that. The new-born generations mask their grief, and you will see if you walk into Bernafay Wood that a young Bernafay Wood is rising midst the dead masts of the old—self-sown. It will grow higher every year till the old is

hidden. The masts will fall, will rot, will recede from this bright sunlight, and relapse into the shade which the new trees will give them, and then soon all will be forgotten. Near Bernafay too the crosses of the dead lie spread out like rows of pins, memorial crosses where there is no body, crosses for the unknown, more surely for the unknown British soldier than for the known. So also it will be with them. The babies are rising, the younger men are growing, growing to hide all and everything. The nakedness of reality which we see to-day will be hidden in the shade by and by. These brand-new cemeteries, looking often so fresh and rich in their masses of brown-stained wood, will pass. They will first be re-set-up in stone. 1921 will see them rolling out in new stone crosses, at first startlingly pallid and virginal, but as the months go on, getting gradually greyened and darkened, rain-washed, wind-blown, then falling a little from the straight. Flowers will bloom as new summers shine o'er the dead. Visitors will come. There will be a greater time of visiting the cemeteries and the battlefields than there yet has been. Gardeners will be conscientious, and then some less conscientious as the years roll by and visitors become less. Most of the cemeteries in the more obscure places will be half-forgotten and gone desolate. There must come a time when no more visit the burial-places of the great war than visit now the cemeteries of

the Crimea. In 1914 the great cemetery above Sevastopol, kept by a German gardener, had become from a national point of view utterly unvisited and forgotten. A roll used to be kept there of the visitors who came in their hundreds after the Crimean war was over, dwindling to a score a year and then to less than ten, and then to twos and threes and ones. The living who survived the Crimea do not need to go to Russia now, for they have joined the dead long since. So it will be with us; we shall join the authentic dead, and the young ones will have forgotten whilst chattering of some other war.

Meanwhile look reverently at the graves of the men of the 32nd A.I.F., with little rising suns adorning the centre-posts of their crosses! See where lies Capt. Claude with his high memorial, or Private Harry who carried out an equal sacrifice with him.

Rusty old cans on ten-foot poles mark the limits of the burial-ground, and a notice says "Cemetery closed" as one might read outside a theatre at night—"Pit full" "Gallery full" "Stalls full." On the hillside above, sounds the laughter of men and the clatter of spades where a new acre of God is being dug, the foundations of a new theatre being laid. Here French Negroes, Flemings, and French peasants are at work under the guidance of British soldiers. Occasionally a car rushes up through the dust and a couple of

British officers come forward to see how things are going on.

Passing on to Longueval you see the masts of Longueval Wood, but before you come to it there stands now at the cross-roads a "café-restaurant," an unpainted wooden hut. Here with the sun streaming full on their faces sit two Falstaffian wights with bottles labelled Malaga between them and glasses full. On their dewy red chins and necks there are three or four folds of flesh; red veins run down their necks like gutters at the side of a house. They hold hands and sing and make everyone in the tavern laugh—then swallow—swallow—swallow, the wine rolls down their exuberant gullets.

Suddenly there is a note of warning in the restaurant, whisperings about *l'officier*, to make it appear as if the men were drinking beer, the woman comes and takes the wine-bottles and pours their contents into metal tankards, sweeps the table clean of wine driblets, and reprimands the topers.

They pull themselves together and take on a sobered gait. One of them opens a sand-bag in his possession and brings out two enormous door-steps of bread and butter. Silence reigns. There is a suspense. Someone evidently is expected. Will it be a dapper, constrained, politely inquisitive British officer? Hardly! Ah, here he is! Enter fiery British sergeant-major with bristling

moustache and bright crown on his sleeve, stout, smart, and red.

"Na then," says he, darting upon the Falstaffs, "play the game, play the bloomin' game. Come on, travai in the cemetery. Officeer come, no bon pour moy, bon pour vous, no bon pour moy. Com' on now or I'll jolly well have to shift yer. The Belgiques and the Algeerians know all about yer. It's all over the place."

"Ca ne fait rien."

"Ca-ne-fait-rien pour vous but not pour moy. Officeer bocu faché avec moy. You no catch it, I catch it, compris?"

One of the grave-diggers offers his red wrist to be felt.

"Yers I know," says the sergeant-major indignantly. "Moy zig-zag las' night. But n-no zig-zag to-day."

They offer him their glasses—apparently of beer. He sips one and then drains it, and then drains the other one too.

"Now com' on, com' on into cemetery and work with the others," he continues, wiping his moustache. The Falstaffs try to rise, but fall back into their seats laughing. Finally the sergeant-major hits one a heavy crack on the head with his stick and pulls his red right ear out like india-rubber to double length, tweaks the other Falstaff by the nose, and pulls them both up, and shakes them.

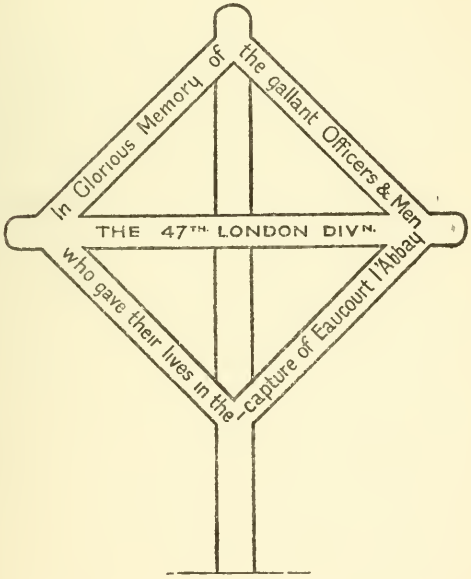
"Na then," says he. "Quick March to the cemetery!" And they go.

How the dead would have laughed to see this scene! How living are the living!

The way is toward Flers and toward Ginchy. In a grey haze of autumn sunshine the battlefields stretch like a sea; green waves to the limit of eyes' view. And there are bits of worn-down woods like those mysterious wrecks of forest which come into view upon some shores when a neap-tide leaves them bare.

Ten years ago the whole land was a fair pleasaunce. Ten years hence it will doubtless be tamed again if not so fair. The *sinistrés* of the Somme are doing a marvellous work already, filling in the pits, levelling with their spades, and ploughing up the whole with their little petrol-ploughs. The shell-splashed approaches to the line can with industry be recovered. And the Frenchman when working for himself has what seems a slavish love of toil. He does his real worship bending over *la France* and he will work on to the end. He has to do a hundred times what he has already done—and he will do it. A hundredth part of the battle area of the Somme has been recovered, and on the ninety-nine parts grow all that naturally would arise if man died out upon this fertile world. The stinging-nettles are higher than a man's head and rise on full fleshy stalks,

and they are thick like a wall. They grow from the caked black mud, from sunken equipment and horses and men and all the jetsam of war. They can make no-man's land strange and terrible yet, though not so terrible if still impassable. You see gleaming above the green main-flood of


In Glorious Memory of the gallant Officers & Men
THE 47TH LONDON DIVN.
who gave their lives in the capture of Eaucourt l'Abbaye

nettle a white Ionic cross shining afar and make it your landmark. You reach it as a swimmer coming from some ship to a white buoy on the sea, and find it to be the monument to the 47th Londons in memory of the taking of Eaucourt. And yonder is a conventional scribble on the moor —the ruins of Eaucourt. You come out on to a

limy plank road, listening to distant explosions from the returned peasants making *sauter les abris* with dynamite, and then the eye rests on an ugly hump of weed-grown rock, a strange uprising from the centre of a large tableland. It is the Butte of Warlencourt, for the possession and retention of which what quantities of blood were shed, the famous Butte which you can walk up now as you would walk upstairs. Here stand wooden monuments to the 6th, 8th and 9th Durham Light Infantry—to the 2nd South African Infantry, and also to Sachs Inf. Regt. 159 who held the Butte against all comers in 1916 and recaptured it on the 25th March 1918, and the thoughtful Germans have given their monument a concrete base. From the top of the Butte there is a complete circle of view, and one sees a light railway going from it towards Eaucourt lined with dead desperate trees, one sees once more as it were waves of the sea on leagues of no-man's land, black ruins of woods, wrecks of villages—a wonderful standing point and vantage ground in the great Somme scene.

It is two miles to the entrance to Bapaume. The route nationale from Albert runs smooth and level below the Butte, a track for space-devouring motors. On the right of the road the luscious brownness of the massed timber of an infinite array of new wooden crosses; on the left, swarthy and scraggy, thistle-swallowed, the decaying memorials

of the German dead—Hier ruht Friedrich Blohm, Paul Vogel, August Dill and the rest, till Germany comes and takes them back again or in time they are forgotten and lost. Bapaume is just ahead, but the Army stops short of it—like flies dragging their limbs across a little fly-paper they tire and can go no further. There they stick for the dreadful winter of 1916-17 in the most loathsome trenches of the war, in foul and deepening liquescence, living and dead and rats in a fiendish domesticity. Leagues of destruction behind them; an enemy wall of flesh and bayonet in front; rain or cloud or mist, and only occasionally a mocking sun above. A fresh-faced new officer from the Caithness coast joined in the late autumn of '16. He arrived at the line at night. His first duty was to superintend a burying party—some three hundred sodden green bundles to be disposed of —three hundred gleaned from the mud and the pits and the verges of no-man's land. He came to the front imbued with the faith of Donald Hankey, and the belief that under him he would find "the everlasting arms." He could not endure the ribaldry of the mess and the war-bred cynicism of those who believed in letting *others* be heroic. He brought a Kingsley-Carlylean fervour with him, and believed in "putting his back into it," and doing even the meanest duty as if it were infinitely worth while. He tried to know his sergeants and his men. He was so energetic in

the football field playing officers versus sergeants that the onlookers laughed. He tried to stop bad language and gambling, and he routed out people to go to the padre's voluntary Sunday evening services at the back of the lines. He came in 1916; he lasted till 1918. What was the effect on this man? This, that by 1918 he used such bad language himself that even the N.C.O.'s were surprised. He exhausted the conventional execrations of the mess-room, and used expressions which would never be heard there. We carried him to his grave at C—— and his sergeants remarked how commonly he had come to use expressions which no officer would ordinarily employ. Withal he had his drink and his bet, and became what is called by males, *entre eux*, a "man's man." Poor hero—from that night of burying green bundles to that morning when we buried him—he marched through the valley of the shadow of death, tormented as Pilgrim was by hobgoblins and satyrs. But when he died he shed his war body, he shed that lurid phraseology, and became once more, no doubt, the Kingsley-Carlylean hero that he was, with some sort of knowledge of human sorrow which those who lived in peace knew not. So it must have been also with those who once breathed within the sodden green bundles. They shook off something evil when they died, but in passing through it they must somehow have understood more. Sorrow

dimmed the eyes even of the hardest swearer of the Army. And the dead now constrain us to a new human tenderness, they empower us to touch more delicately and to understand more deeply—to love more. Pity for us if we do not now live differently because of the dead!

Thus as one walks through Bapaume and sees the children of new Bapaume playing in their innocence in the streets and the ruins, one can look down on them more tenderly, more caressingly, for the sake of the dead, passing on, as it were, man's forgiveness to man. And in our relationships with the grown-ups, our neighbours, ourselves dressed differently, we can have more patience, more compassion, more readiness to help and to be kind. It comes from the dead, it comes from the living who were dead.

What that winter was before the Germans retreated! What the hours on the Cross were before the Saviour died! In our loathing of pain we shudder to think of it. Others bore it; we must bear it. And when the time is passed Golgotha remains, that Golgotha which was in fact so near to the gate of the Temple itself. In Bapaume, where all houses have been made vaults, stand the white ruins of a church, greyish-white and spectral as if of the material of another world. But for its pointing walls it is one white ruin, loveliness in a heap and the baleful shadow of the hand of the malefactor. In the ruins of the

church of the leaning Virgin at Albert the first words one reads are JESUS NATUS EST, as if the ruins had been given tongue to say in the moment of death the supreme Christian paradox, and at Bapaume as you reverently approach this strange new *Pieta* you see still unshattered the Church's Latin carved on stone—AD MEUM SANCTUARIUM—to My sanctuary. If, like Thomas, you do not believe, you must go forth and touch with your hands and feel with your eyes—to My sanctuary!

Bapaume lies more abased even than Albert. It is as if its stones had had a soul and been afraid, vibrant with the horror of humanity. The consternation of inanimate matter is expressed in its ruins. The Hotel de Ville, its seat of power, was evidently built of large granite blocks which the rising German mine of March 1917 must have scattered like hail over the town. And amidst these mighty stones flew the tender bodies and the spirits of the French deputés, Albert Taillandier and Raoul Briquet, who had just said in their hearts—*The enemy hath departed*, when the enemy was suddenly at their doors.

The *sinistrés* are living in cellars and wooden huts. The railway-station is two "baby elephants" of rusty iron. Where were large shops and as one can imagine, in the old days, shop-fronts full of ladies' costumes and hats, windows displaying bedroom suites of furniture, windows full of stationery and books, are now diminutive piles of rubbish

pathetically ticketed with the name of the old establishment—Maison Betrancourt, Maison this, Maison that—*transferée à un autre lieu.* In the Grande Place stands the much-shrapnelled base of a monument where the stone hero has gone to join the hero he commemorated, and the spite of a new era has even endeavoured to erase his name.

Where thousands lived and loved and pushed their trade and died, now but a few hundred hold together in the midst of the wilderness. They have assembled from all points of the compass. War whirled some to Germany, some to Paris, some to the Pyrenees. The hopeful came back and the faithful decided to stay. It is a picture of human triumph over destruction, but only a pathetic triumph, not a glorious one. In the summer, with long days and warm nights it is less unnatural to live in this waste. Warmth and light join the *sinistrés* to all France and Europe, but winter with its short days and cold and great darkness folds away the vision of a resurrection. A poky train, without lights, creeps at night from Achiet to Bapaume through villages of fearful name. Bapaume becomes conscious of all the dreadful places which surround it, places whose names are full of the awe of death and of the war—Riencourt, Bullecourt, Ervillers, Mory, Vaulx-Vraucourt, and a hundred others, nothing in themselves but held in the cerements of the dead.

It is a strange walk now, to the Hindenburg

line. You are traversing ground which was four times overtrodden and overfought. The Germans took it in 1914. We shelled it in 1916 and drove the enemy out in 1917. The enemy swept over it in March 1918 and then let it go as he retired in September. German, French, and British lie buried beside one another. The Germans lost their dead and then recaptured them. It is an appalling country, still as it were sulphurous with the war, stinking vaguely of cordite. The dead have got a grip on it, and hold with their hands the lap of earth which the peasants are ploughing. The air which is apt to sparkle in autumn frost is full of the light of the eyes of the men who once lived. And that light rests about the broken barns and billets and churches and halls. There is an influence which is pulling one way all the time, and that is not towards this world.

The graveyards are many, and they have their history. It always seems a pity that it was not allowed during the war to make mention on the cross how and where each soldier met his death. The military mind imagined that such details might give information to the enemy or to the Press, and forbade anything beyond name, number, and regiment. Texts also were prohibited, the chaplains being over-ruled. Not that texts could entirely be kept out. In one of the cemeteries near Bapaume there stands for the time being a large wooden cross inscribed "He is not

here; he is risen," which has an astonishing effect amidst a thousand crosses which are dumb.

There are many many rows of human bodies planted out near Vaulx-Vraucourt, first a German cemetery with its old crosses torn to bits, partly no doubt by shells; and then side by side a regular British cemetery where lie many Australians, one of whom, Lieut. Pidgeon (aged 23) has a little figure of Christ riven from a crucifix stuck in the earth beside his wooden cross. Here lie also many of the Leeds Rifles, seven even in one grave, killed evidently in the terrible encounter with the German machine-gunners in September '18. The German memorials go more into decay each day, but a man is paid to keep the British bright and clean and in repair, and his dog bites at the heels of the pilgrim as he walks from the dead to the dead. Facing both are the gaunt white ruins of the village church and the hideous smashage of the French communal cemetery, and there the people have put artificial roses in old rusty shell-cases in front of their stricken memorials.

Further on, beside the light railway which runs north to Ecoust, there are tiny cemeteries. In one of these Germans and British are mingled, thus—Gefreiter Luckenmeyer of the German Field artillery betwixt a man of the Londons and a man of the Devons, and a German unknown and a British Tommy lie in a little plot together

by themselves. In some cemeteries the bodies of our foes were buried just outside those of our own kindred, but as exhumed bodies were brought in, ever increasingly, it has come about that we have surrounded German graves with our own, and as it were accidentally forgiven our enemies and received them into the midst of the family.

Over the way at Vraucourt Copse, perched high in a sun-kissed wheatfield lies Lieut. A. S. Robinson of the Royal Scots, with 22 private soldiers' names inscribed on his cross. One wondered if it would be true to say—"Here he lies where he longed to be" and did he love Stevenson and often quote

> Under the wide and starry sky
> Dig my grave and let me lie.

These Royal Scots have the widest of all starry skies above them and the unbarred gate of heaven in its midst.

A little further still and you have the Australian cemetery at Noreuil at the corner of the road, rectilinear, handsome, clean and cared-for, neatly fenced in with wire and having a little white gate by which to enter. But outside the cemetery and as it were falling back in every attitude of banishment and despair, the old faded wood and broken crosses of the Germans, overgrown with weeds, crazy-roofed crosses, aslant, tumbled. In 1916 the enemy began to bury here.

The Challenge of the Dead

In 1917 he left his dead behind. In 1918 he recaptured them and repaired the crosses—and added to them. In 1918 it was a decent graveyard; one could read the names of all the dead. But their kindred went away and forgot. Their crosses are the monuments of the forgotten and the vague memorial of a useless sacrifice.

Doubtless the drama of the penultimate year 1917 did not centre in the supra-Somme country. Its scenes of action were at Lens and Vimy, at Pilkelm Ridge and Passchendaele. The year which ran on from the German retirement was the strangest of the war, promising everything, fulfilling nothing, beginning with Haig's victory interview and ending with the failures in Flanders and the German break-through from Cambrai. It was the year of American self-announcement, of the Russian revolution, of the pros and contras of peace at Stockholm, of the victory of the Bolsheviks, of the Italian debacle. Germany seemed to grow stronger all the year, and the morale of the Allies waned. Men no longer betted one another that it would be all over by Christmas. Lord Grey's supposed prediction was forgotten. The whisper went abroad that "it might last a lifetime," and then in mock cynicism, *They say the first seven years will be the worst.* New units hitherto untried in the war still made their appearance, whole battalions whose war-history commences with the conflicts about Lens

or the battles for Passchendaele Ridge. The Derby drafts were reputed to come marching to the strains of "The Church's One Foundation" singing their own confession—

> We are Lord Derby's Army
> Just come across the sea.
> We cannot march, we cannot shoot,
> What bloomin' good are we?

And the old army said "Where have you been this long while?" The conscripts however were to follow in even more desperate case, and when they first reached France and their tender feet struck the cobbled roadways they sang—not a hymn, but a new version of "Auld Lang Syne"—

> We're here because we're here,
> Because we're here, because we're here,
> We're here because we're here,
> Because we're here, because we're here.

"Take me back to dear old Blighty!" was the song of the whole army and had completely displaced Tipperary.

No doubt owing to the German withdrawal to the Hindenburg Line the Allied plan of attack for the summer had been foiled. All the machinery of assault had been arranged for a stubborn and dreadful prolongation of the Somme battle between the horizons where winter had halted it. The greatest concentration of guns which the war had seen had to be liquidated. New

gun-positions had to be dug and a new concentration achieved. Telephone and telegraph had to be brought up to a new line. Organisation work which would ordinarily have been accomplished in the quiet winter months had to be done through the campaigning season of Spring and Summer. Men looked less seriously on the war, though the war was not less serious for them. Witness the sinister stare of the Lens country which knew the 1917 army and has looked on terrible things. We made Lens in 1917 into a narrow deep pocket full of Germans. The taking of it was confidently anticipated. Fleet Street wanted it to serve on a platter to Herod. But it could not be had though thousands died for it. The enemy held it by miracle. It was impossible to hold such a position but the impossible held.

Grey and terrible is Vimy Ridge with its line of block-houses and the masts of Farbus Wood. Looking outward from Vimy o'er the vast Arras war-scape the eye is sick and returns in vision to itself as the dove returned to the Ark when it found no other mercy of the Lord above misery's tide.

Praise God the enemy could not do to Arras what we did to Lens! Arras still lives, surmounting the grandeur of her ruins. The Cathedral with the top of its massive tower gnawn off by Fate is to be preserved for ever as a memorial of these days. You can climb from the grass-grown

rubble below to mountains of lime and broken stone and reach a high eminence against the pinky-grey fissured wall of the tower. It is sunset, and you look down upon widespread recuperative Arras standing in pink haze into which smoky air or fog is pouring. The houses are grey or splotchy with their shrapnel marks still on them, but there are others which are red and white, and these stand gaping with empty glassless windows. You look on spangling new red roofs, you look on Noah's Arks, you look on half-consumed unsupported walls, you look on shadows which are pits where houses were. On the one hand is the lofty massiveness of the Episcopal Palace—on the other the irrecoverable smash of poor men's homes. From all this great city below, pious men and women used to come to the Cathedral—but now no more shall they come.

You step down from the height, and cross the cobbled immensity of the Cathedral Square. Every shop all the four sides has the same façade above, the same porticos below, and from grimy and broken windows four hundred ruined wizened houses stare. Then night has come. God has called away the redness and left the murk. You turn and see the mountain of God's house. There is no tint of rose in the grey walls now, no petty detail of ruin, but one general effect. The Cathedral tower is a great black mass. It is

suffering made supreme and dominant, the shadow of a mediæval Christ on the Cross. It is a romantic but dreadful pointer full of terror and power. Men creep diminutively across the vast and shoppy square, and the great feudal shadow above them makes them smaller yet.

All night the shadow reigns, becoming even mightier in the moonlight, and crowning itself with starry diadem. But there come the mists of the morning and then morn itself, and you may stand where now no longer Mass is heard—on the East side of the Cathedral, and see the white light of heaven streaming through gossamer and driving out pale silhouettes of the shadows of all the bleared houses of the Square. There are pale peaked shadows of all the façades which face the Cathedral. Over your head sounds the rush of dove's wings. Men and women everywhere are moving; men with their tools and women with their baskets. The life of the city goes on, but the dream of the ruin has fallen back into the night and limbo, and will not be recovered till the stars come again.

The city of Arras was the pilot city of the British in 1917. All Flanders looked to her from the left, all France from the right. And in '18 when the tide of Fortune changed she was our bulwark of defence and was right in the fighting line like a Coeur de Lion with battle-axe at Acre. Our mighty city of coal and steel in England has

chosen specially to identify itself with Arras—Newcastle-on-Tyne—and Arras has many English sons. It is no doubt natural to say that Newcastle has adopted Arras, as we might say of a converted man that he had taken Christ to himself, but the deeper truth is that Arras has adopted Newcastle—"Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you."

The British victories at Arras and the French victories above Verdun were of happy augury. But no victory is a victory unless followed by a victory, and Time itself wilts laurels. Haig's dream of striking the enemy hard and often, leaving no time to recover from a blow at one point before calamity fell upon him at another, proved only a dream. The German invention of mustard gas and the appearance of many hostile tanks upon the scene were examples of the unforeseen. Very efficient tank-guns and studied methods of attack upon tanks reduced the usefulness of our new war-engine to comparatively low terms. In the late summer we embarked on a new campaign in Flanders, and our best weapon was a still boundless belief in our ability to "beat the Hun" whom, mentally, in every possible way, the army under-rated. The Hun, so-called, suffered nothing like so much as our fellows. He would not have stood so much. And of all war-struggles, that which sank at last to rest in the wilderness of Poelcapelle and Passchendaele in

the November of the year seemed the most hopeless.

Much of the main interest of humanity was transferred from the strife at the front to other scenes of action. 1917 was an air and water year, a submarine year, a Gotha year. London was terrified by day by wonderful almost invisible planes which ravaged East-end schools and caused the exodus from Whitechapel to Brighton. Daylight raids were followed by starlight raids, and although the papers of the time laughed at such affairs and said we liked them, there is no need to keep up that deception now. London suffered in mind excruciatingly.

With the persistent bombing of London came a more systematic bombing of the lines at night. It is more unpleasant, though really safer, to await bombs in open fields than it is in London, but the soldier loathed the bomb from air far more than he did the shell. The transverse movement of the shell no doubt gives the mind more scope for judgment and calm than does the missile falling vertically.

The Germans were so impressed by this fear of bombs that they endeavoured to give shelter underground to each and every one of their soldiers when threatened from above. There must have been a regular routine like fire-drill when our bombing planes went over, and Fritz was marched into his enormous subterranean shelters. British

and French troops had no such organised way of escape, and they had to find what cover they could where they were. It was always surprising what a number of miscellaneous casualties were caused by the night-bombers.

Expectation of the German planes' approach was intense, and men could distinguish readily the sound of the engines of our own planes and those of the enemy. There seemed to be something peculiarly sinister in the sound of a "Jerry" and men were fond of imitating it in screeds of words in the style of "Hush hush hush, here comes the bogey man!"

A characteristic imitation given sometimes at regimental concerts used to run in this way:—

I-see-ye, I-see-ye, I-see-ye,
I-see-ye.
I'm coming, I'm coming, I'm coming.
Biv-eee, biv-eee, biv-eee.
Sh, sh . . . . . sh.
HAH!
I'm off, I'm off, I'm off,
I'm off!

And a current French marching-song of the time imitated the promiscuous crump of bomb-explosions thus:—

Il pleut, il pleut des bombes
(Et boum! et bon! badaboum et bon!)
Il s'ecriera Guillaume
Rentrons, rentrons—
Zon, zon.

But no rhyme in any language ever expressed that lurid splash on the night-sky when a bomber was destroyed, that effusion of crimson which caused men's eyes to dilate looking up at it, that sense of dreadfulness and awe and satisfaction, that banishment of pity through fear's reaction which steeped men's minds, as if on the floor of their souls an answering red glow appeared. It was tragical to be bombed, but how much more so to see the bomber die. They died most dreadful deaths, those Zeppelin crews and aero-bus teams, and yet of course they merely died. They met the common soldier's destiny—— Nevertheless you could not lessen the sensation of watching an airman's death by reasonableness. In the lurid spectacle in the heavens men saw not death but a hieroglyphic—a sign.

Men did not liken them to Lucifer cast from heaven, but their fall was like the rebel angels' fall—

> With hideous ruin and combustion, down
> To bottomless perdition.

Day-flying was different and affected the mind in an entirely different way. Even the stricken night-bomber, when his charred remains were seen by daylight, became in enemies' eyes nothing but honourable. The triumph over him was forgotten in a sort of triumph in him. There was a naturally chivalrous attitude towards dead airmen. That chivalry was sometimes spoiled by

human jackals—but the majority nevertheless instinctively preserved it.

Many of the graves of our airmen were marked by crosses which are adorned with carven wings, and in this speaks, not only a military but a human pride. Foot-soldiers did not see in the aeroplane a mere mechanical contrivance but a new human victory over matter. The feats of airmen flattered pedestrian souls, who knew thereby that they could fly if they would, flattered us all. Because men had to enter some section of the fighting services thousands chose to fly and fight who otherwise would not have been tempted off the firmer elements of land and sea. They conquered the first nausea of fear, and learned to live with danger as with a wife. They tumbled above us and we marvelled, not taking anywise into account the war-sting which started them, bidding neither sit nor stand but go. One is not sorry that the guns speak no more. One is not sorry that the night-bombers and Zeppelins have ceased to menace us. But the emptiness of the heavens by day has its sadness now in France, its human wanness and melancholy. One realises that the war brought out the flier—as it were before his time, and we must wait long ere we see in peace the state of air society which he prefigured.

Down below the airmen trudged heavy-footed men. The airmen were literally supermen; those

below were a sort of undermen. In heavily weighted boots, with backs bent and not straightened by war's routine, with clumsily encumbered bodies, trudged under-humanity, through mud, along gulleys, into holes and pits, down into subterranean chambers. The underman enjoyed no human exaltation except occasionally at the prospect of getting free; he had no mercurial lightness on his heels, no rapid quicksilver of mounting imagination; instead, he was gripped downward and held till he died or there was peace. It used to be a common saying that from the moment you stepped off at Havre you were a slave. You walked in the chains of the war. Men's hearts hardened. They told themselves they wanted nothing and cared nothing. Their minds fell victims to a dull passivity or false boisterousness. They banished the bright ego and took up with a Cerberus, yowled the dog-language of the army, and got selfishly irate over biscuits and slops and bully-beef. They grew more and more dirty and came out in boils. Coarse hair grew apace, brows grew lower, hands that had any cunning in them grew to mere claws and clutches, eyes dullened, and the ear-gate stood ajar for the sound of animal noises and animal confessions. The war was a Bacchanalia for the animal in man.

It was in 1917 that Paris leave as a supplement to the usual home leave was common.

This was understood as for the soldier's health. It would stop the boils and ease the system. Men could draw a handsome arrear of pay on the strength of Paris leave, and once in Paris they went deeper than in the dug-outs of the war. Or units were withdrawn to places where the women thronged. Men were robbed by the war of their respect unto their living selves. And 1917 saw the entry of puritan America into the war, the nation of vice-hunting and prohibition, and the rest. But it did not raise the morality of rank and file. The Yanks were shipped with a thirst. The men brought up in sheltered Western communities proved to have no more power than we had to resist the temptations of European vice. The virus of the army seems to have been the same in United States training grounds as in those of England. Material conditions imposed some restraint, but imagination fed the starved side of men's souls with lurid pictures of what obtained in France. Uncle Sam's common soldiers, handsome and clean as they were, and brave, yet brought with them an expectancy which caused them to take no moral lead but on the contrary to plunge headlong into that war-mire which we had all been making. And disease ravaged the American ranks. Some few thousands fell dead on the field of battle and some tens of thousands were wounded, but disease casualties filled the hospitals. It was fortunate

for America's manhood that the war was not protracted. Their war enthusiasm was pushing them on. They did not realise that what they called "the shooting gallery" was a myriad-fold death-trap. Death in many shapes was ready to raven on America. As her men were inexperienced in war's alarms, so also were they unfitted to face the moral ordeal. Humanitarianism, materialism, and a superimposed morality do not produce men more capable of withstanding temptation. Purity depends too often on keeping temptation away. The Yanks brought their own brand of bad language with them—a language beside which lurid English was but pale. Where they had learned such verbal frightfulness seemed puzzling. But curiously enough it caused the American soldier to be hail-fellow well-met. He brought no airs of moral superiority or prudishness. It became a pastime in the British army to imitate admiringly the American type of swearing. It is all beyond the power of the pen. But those who heard it know. If the Yanks had kept to this extreme they would have remained enduringly popular—but they vaunted their prowess and exaggerated their feats and ignored the reality of the hell through which others had been, and they started the talk of their winning the war, and so lost ground. The Americans in France were on the whole perplexing to the average European. Their exaggerated thirst for war's

relaxations on the one hand tended to make them one with the other armies in the field, but their idea of superiority kept them separate.

At Calais now the boxes are stacked on the quays with the embalmed American dead. At great cost of time and labour the dead soldiers are being removed from the places where they fell and packed in crates for transport to America. In this way America's sacrifice is lessened. For while in America this is considered to be America's own concern, it is certain that it is deplored in Europe. The taking away of the American dead has given the impression of a slur on the honour of lying in France. America removes her dead because of a sweet sentiment towards her own. She takes them from a more honourable resting-place to a less honourable one. It is said to be due in part to the commercial enterprise of the American undertakers, but it is more due to the sentiment of mothers and wives and provincial pastors in America. That the transference of the dead across the Atlantic is out of keeping with European sentiment she ignores, or fails to understand. America feels that she is morally superior to Europe. American soil is God's own country and the rest is comparatively unhallowed. To be one in death with Frenchmen, Italians, Negroes, Chinamen, Portuguese, does not suit her frame of mind. Of course, lack of imagination, lack of knowledge of the war and of the great

mix-up of the dead is natural enough at a distance of three thousand miles—the vain thought that the identity of dead bodies with human beings can be retained. As it is, the inscription on every hundredth cross in France is probably a misnomer. There never was time for meticulous care, and the dead were not always buried by full daylight or identified by other than the slightest of clues. Is it remarkable if someone receives instead of soldier son the body of a coolie from China, or if a citizen should receive what portends to be his own corpse? By risking such accidents the majesty of the dead is offended. If love desired its dead again, love should come and lift its dead with its own hands and carry it home.

Politically understood, there should be no property in the dead bodies of this great war. There is only one totality of death and suffering. The dead of the war are a blend. One high stone might stand at the head of each cemetery, and on it all the names be inscribed. The little crosses with name and numbers on each are but desperate human reminders of individuality. But for a dreadful peace, worse than the war, America would have been convinced, as was her war-commander Pershing, that it was nobler to leave her sacrifices on the altar with the others.

Had America's ideal won all had been different, but only the side she joined won and not the ideal. France and England broke the spirit of America's

great President and ruined him as the Kaiser was ruined, relegated him to another Amerongen, drove him to his Ekaterinburg too, the third great monarch and leader of men to lose his crown in the war. The American masses were left leaderless, bereft of their ideal. In contempt for a vain France and distrust of a lip-serving inimical England they plunged for "*America first and always and one hundred per cent.*" But had Wilson carried his great program there had been no estrangement, no exhuming of the American dead. America would have gloried in her European shrines. Therefore in looking upon the collapsed heaps of coffins in the harbour and the dead glowering through riven wood, one is really looking upon an aspect of the Treaty of Versailles. In the second year after the war you see terrible things. Who could have foreseen thousands of dead stacked in the holds of Atlantic vessels, making their unmurmurous return across the ocean!

It is night again in human history, deep night, when we dream things of evil and look upon sights of horror which we have no power to dispel. In the gathering gloom of the autumn of 1920 see a whole succession of phantoms stalking. Ireland goes wailing and clanking her chains. Exultant France struts and threatens. Ghosts of Tsar and Tsarina are crying pitifully from Siberian dust. Red demons, mirthless and terrible, stare

at us from Russia. Italia stabs nightly fair Fiume. And all the while maledictory shouts and cries are heard on all hands.

Spectres and ghosts and things of evil stalk around and terrify us, and there is only one way to lay them low, and that is by the token of the Cross—by the token of the crosses, the hundreds of thousands of them that run out like rows of pins in France. It is only coming from France that the right approach can be made to new life. Let each new man faring forth into this beset enchanted world dip his soul in the blood of the Altar of France—or if not his very soul, let him at least dip a kerchief or a flag there—for remembrance. With that charm he can uncurse curses and disenchant enchantment and break through the chimeras and fogs which cling to the base of the mountain of the world, and he will reach the singing-bird and the water of life at the top of the mountain, and then restore, as in the Arabian tale, the dead to life.

Doubtless every man who was in the Army and took a chance of death and yet escaped, must have reflected on his good fortune, the strange light of Providence which fell upon his destiny and spared him whilst on all hands his friends and neighbours and fellow-countrymen had fallen. As the soldier left the Army and became civilian again he inevitably thought to himself—"Whereas I might have been dead I am alive; whereas I might

be bond I am free." And some indeed could add "Whereas I might have been a cripple, or blind, or lamed, or a neurasthenic or a shell-shocked broken man I am sound and fit and have a whole life and freedom to give to the new time which comes with the blessing of peace."

The Frenchman came back to a glorified and magnified France; to a proved capacity to defeat and hold in check a deadly and historical enemy. The Englishman came back to a free England, to a nation who was queen of the nations, to a larger and more untrammelled world-empire; the Belgian to a justified and safeguarded Belgium; the American to an America which had achieved for the first time in history a complete sense of nationhood and unity. The Serbian returned to a resurrected Serbia and a prospective future of Southern Slav greatness. Of the Italian, who joined in the war as a bargain with the others and did not fight primarily for our ideals, we will say nothing. But how near we all were to being beaten, and to realising the very opposite of the present happy potentialities. But a turn in the wheel or a hair in the scale, and the French would have been slaves, the Englishman beaten on land if not on sea would have returned cowering to his little island, empire falling from his grasp and almost the whole bill of the war to defray by the efforts of his restive working-class population; the Belgian a German subject; the American flouted

and anxious with the shadow of a terrible new war to fight all by himself in the years to come; the Serbian a peon of Bulgaria or shackled in the heavy rusty Austrian irons. When we are in despair in 1920, 1921, 1922 we should all say to ourselves—"Whereas we might have been slaves we are free; whereas we might have been dead we are alive——" It is what the graveyards of France tell those who look at them. The dead are all pointing mutely to themselves. Their crosses are the direction-posts of new life.

Our enemy came nearer to overthrowing us by the result of the Russian Revolution than by anything else. The defection of Russia, the liberation of the German and Austrian Eastern armies, nearly took victory away from us, and we have God and our cause to thank for salvation. In the late summer and autumn of 1917 the tide of victory turned and began to roll the other way. At the battle for Passchendaele commenced the last year of the war. In that year we experienced every emotion of victory and defeat. The year opened inauspiciously at Passchendaele where so many fell trying to traverse an infernal area of wire and pits and mud, facing the reinforced machine-gunners, facing the new gas, facing the fire of a vastly increased artillery. Many a cheery boy with muddy uniform and bright morning face stood up for the last time at Passchendaele, and unexpectedly—died for England. You may seek

their bodies in the Flemish earth to-day. Perhaps one of them is the unknown soldier in the Abbey. But their spirits are far away from here. They are watchful and radiant and celestial now—not so lovable perhaps in their immortality, for how can mortals feel for the immortals, but enormously more lovable in our mortal conception of them than ever they were when alive—the dead of the last year of the war.

Passchendaele was followed by the sudden triumph of the Austrian armies in the Italian Alps, and the surrender of a hundred thousand Italians and a thousand guns. Revolutionary propaganda was said to have been ravaging the Italian soldier's mind. Others said the Italians sold the day to the enemy. But the prime cause of Austrian victory was to be sought in the great accession of strength due to the Russian lapse from war. No more offensives of Brusilof; no Grand Duke Nicholas any more to terrify Vienna; not even a Kornilof! Austria naturally rounded upon her Southern foe with double might. Vienna bells rang forth and Berlin floated in military joy. Wilhelmstrasse, the street of the Kaiser, reflected deeply and sucked in the significance of the new victory. After a desperate summer of peace-seeking suddenly a last hope of triumph dawned like a fiery star late in the night and nigh unto morning. The thought of coming with a white flag to the Council of Europe was banished. Instead

the stern decree of war to the uttermost bound the German mind to the old choice of "complete victory or downfall." Despite our opinion of the enemy conveyed in sneers at concrete dug-outs and funk-holes and the "Kamerad" cry, the Germans decided to come all out and win or lose on a gambler's throw. It was perhaps more calculated and more calculable than the cast of the dice, but if the Allies won, Germany had no second chance and would know that she had lost.

Teutonic preparations went ahead. The Allies took little stock of these preparations, not believing that the enemy had much kick left in him. Instead of organising our defence we planned a new attack upon the Germans, and to the astonishment and chagrin of the latter the Byng Boys carried off the laurels of the Battle of Cambrai. Fritz was taken by surprise in late November, and we nearly went all the way to Cambrai. Fleet Street wished to have joy-bells rung in London, but the Church wisely bade us wait, while wrathful Germany averred that we had gone into a trap in which we should presently be terribly caught. Then in the break-through of Gouzeaucourt we learned the lesson that a new and more dangerous enemy was in front of us.

As you walk now along the Byng Boys way on a November afternoon and the sun goes down in greyness and gloom you can feel the mystery of the battle as if it had occurred hundreds of

years ago. Reality has become remote, remote as the last songs and shouts of the men who went through. Sadness has covered the earth. It is all incredibly empty and desolate. On a post on the road you discern through the evening mist Ici Boursies and then after much plodding you pass the grey empty Canal du Nord with its crumpled rusty bridges, and skirt the naked bones of Bourlon Wood. Then by the side of the road all the dead of Anneux are lined up to see you pass. You go on, but *they* remain. It seems as if when you have passed some spectral sergeant must say to all those pallid ranks "Fall out!" and the order is broken up, and the dead mingle and commingle till another comes past upon the broad highway. Night settles like a curtain shutting off Cambrai from the view, and no light on any hand tells of a return to home or of happiness restored. Suddenly the silence is broken by three blundering lorries—old lorries of the war tearing past you back on the road to Bapaume—ghostly lorries laden with doors, doors only, to be dumped at some wilderness somewhere which was once a town. They pass, and the night-silence resumes its sway, and there are no stars but it is utter peace. Again a spectral post—Ici Fontaine, Ici Fontaine Notre Dame, and you have reached the end of the fight, and the bridge where life met death and both stood at last immobile, unyielding.

A happier-looking place is the wood of Havrin-

court where a Brigade of Guards was sleeping, waiting and resting after the ordeal of Bourlon and Fontaine. They had been relieved on the 26th November and marched back in snow to this wood where in the umbrage of the forest and on the carpet of withered leaves and snow they set up many tents. And whiles they rested the enemy put into action a bold plan of encirclement which might have caused the complete loss of Sir Julian Byng's army and guns and of everything else in the pocket of Cambrai. One of the most remarkable moments of the whole war occurred. Of many impressions of what took place the story which one of the Guards' quartermasters tells is most pictorial. He had set off early in the morning of the 30th November for Villers au Flos to get money to pay his men. They had just come out of action. He rode through Metz and Bertingcourt, where the other Brigades were billeted, and no one was stirring. There was no hint of coming trouble when he passed through Ruyaulcourt, where lay the Divisional Headquarters Staff. On all roads were the usual road-carts, plodding along in humdrum style. But by the time he reached Villers au Flos, however, an alarm of some kind had evidently come, for the cashier was busy packing up his cash and his papers, and flatly refused to pay out any money whatever. Though not wishing to confess fright, he was evidently extremely perturbed.

"But I must have money for the men," cried the visiting officer. "The coffee-bars and canteens will soon be arriving up there and opening; the men are tired after the fighting. They have won a great victory and must have some relaxation now, so you'll have to give me some money."

"It isn't a victory, it's a retreat," said the cashier. "They say the Germans have broken through."

"Rot," said the Guardsman. "I have just come from the line and all is quiet. You get wind up easily, you folk."

He gained his point, and was happy to turn about his horse with a full 16,000 francs to pay out. On his return, however, the German break-through became apparent and he realised that the cashier had been right. He sampled all the adventures of the situation. First he saw soldiers without rifle or equipment running intently, and he, not suspecting the significance of their flight, thought there was a paper-chase on, arranged by some regiment that was resting in the neighbourhood. But at Bertingcourt, to his great astonishment, he met a battalion of Guards in fighting order marching to action in the opposite direction from that in which he understood the enemy to be. It was incredible that it could have happened, but he realised that the enemy had somehow shifted his ground. This regiment had been fighting at Bourlon and Fon-

taine in the north—and now they were marching south to fight again. South and not north—what could have happened! He "passed the time of day" to the commander and learned that the worst was true, the enemy had broken through at Gouzeaucourt. The further he rode along the way to Havrincourt Wood the stranger became the sights which confronted his eyes. The roads, which had now been cleared by order, began to have troops going up to stem the German advance, and every now and then a car plunging the other way. Out of Bertingcourt he met the 2nd Brigade Machine-Gun transport, saddled up and under orders. The water in the jackets of the machine-guns was frozen and they wondered how they'd thaw them. There were still many fugitives on the road, and at cross-roads he overheard two of them who were contradicting one another in the most violent language as to which was the way. He could tell that their nerves had got the better of them by their high falsetto tones. They were as unlike characteristic British soldiers as it is possible to imagine. At Metz-en-Couture there was a complete jam of traffic, which lasted all the way along the high-road towards Gouzeaucourt. The retiring masses were greatly in excess of those going up. They were mostly the transport of those who belonged to the rear—railway-men, A.S.C., ambulance, canteen, Y.M.C.A. and what-not. A pained

expression was on the chauffeurs' faces, every one of whom seemed to desire to say what a terrific speed he would make if he could only get clear of the deadlock. He saw the ranks of the Guards broken and made uneven by the struggle to get through. Outside Metz was a Colonel of Grenadiers on horseback, enraged past belief at the obstruction of his Guardsmen, and addressing the chauffeurs and wagon-men in every imaginable blend of language. His aspect so terrified our officer with the cash that he decided to make a detour and get to his quarters at Havrincourt Wood by a cross-country route. But the Germans had a high-velocity gun on Metz and shelled it methodically, and he had not taken many steps when an exploding shell wounded his horse in the head. He did not want anything to happen to him with 16,000 francs on his person, so he decided to brave the presence of the justifiably enraged Grenadier and proceed along the roadway as best he could. This he did, but when at last he got to Havrincourt Wood his battalion was gone and he was not able to get abreast of his men and pay them till they came out of action some days afterwards and the Germans had been stopped.

The alarm had come about breakfast-time. Nothing was doing in camp; no parades. Both officers and men were taking things easy in order to shake off the Bourlon Wood exhaustion. Some

were sleeping, some were shaving, one Brigadier was in his bath, when the order came for the Guards to stand-to and be in readiness, as the position east of Gouzeaucourt was considered "obscure."

The Headquarters of the 1st Brigade was at Metz, and a great deal was due, no doubt, to the Brigadier who discovered that the Germans had broken through and promptly decided to push on and occupy the high ground east of Gouzeaucourt. The General of the 1st Brigade of Guards was a fine figure of a soldier, with bold eyes, massive shoulders and brows, and finely-curved smiling lips. Mounted on his white horse at the cross-roads of Metz he was in charge of the situation. It was he who saw the first fugitives come in, green, trembling, speechless with panic, and as others followed breathless the same way, he deflected their course into a great courtyard, lately the courtyard of the Army Corps Headquarters. With that the Brigadier rode out along the Gouzeaucourt road, and presently beyond Gouzeaucourt Wood he came into contact with German patrols, and he rode back to Metz and called out the Guards. Meanwhile the extra-ordinary stampede continued — Labour men, gunners with breech-blocks in their hands, rifle-men with or without rifles and equipment, trans-port, some men half-dressed. And those who could speak called out to those whom they met

that the Germans were coming. There were officers as well as men, and even chaplains, in the throng, and a German aeroplane hovered overhead and followed with machine-gun fire, methodically stirring up the panic to a higher and higher pitch. The Guards debouched from Metz in close column and deployed in artillery formation under cover of Gouzeaucourt Wood. As they hurried up the road they passed the fugitive streams going the other way. The look on the Guards' faces as they encountered the others was one of astonishment and bewilderment. It would have been difficult to agree that the two streams of troops belonged to the same nation. Two different conditions of soldiery. With one there was discipline, with the others discipline had gone.

The road from Gouzeaucourt to Metz is a sort of gully, a deep-dug way between high banks, and along the sides one still sees shards of old rifles, rusty helmets, bits of equipment, and mess-tins. The peasants in farming the ditches have unearthed not a few Mills' bombs which now repose in piles by the side of the road. Here also reposes a dug-up Lewis gun and various parts and bits of war's attire thrown away possibly in the stampede, perhaps however, despite an inevitable association of ideas, belonging to another moment of the war. For although the Guards re-established the line once more it broke again in the succeeding March,

when once more the Germans pursued their foes through the jetsam-covered streets of Gouzeaucourt.

Gouzeaucourt was evidently greatly smitten by the war. It is a very extensive village raked by the devil from end to end. It swarms now on housetop and in yard with builders and joiners. A widespread clatter ascends from every road so that the very sparrows cannot hear themselves chirp. Hundreds of white barrack-like shelters have sprung into being. But as if the villagers had not had time for small amenities, every street and alley is strewn with brickbats. The scenery of the war still holds, and November 30th could be played over again without loss of reality from the scene.

The road out to Metz is quiet enough now with carts of turnips jolting along where three Novembers ago the lorries were fleeing. On the top of the bank stretches the view of a war moorland becoming once more grain-productive. To the north lies a pleasant boscage, the verdure of Havrincourt. Along the south goes the straight line and the tree-stumps which mark the Cambrai —Peronne road.

Metz-en-Couture looks like a great rubbish-heap from which masses of decaying brickwork are projecting. It is much less alive than Gouzeaucourt. Its returned French peasants are however at work. Like all desolated places which are off

the railway it has to depend on motor transport for the materials of reconstruction, and it is characteristically behindhand compared with towns on the railway. And Gouzeaucourt is well served by a railway from Cambrai.

At Metz-en-Couture is a roadside cemetery. How good that most of the cemeteries are actually close to the highways, and even automobilists speeding past will see them, though it be only a blur on the consciousness. All the crosses will fade into one another as a car passes them. Here at Metz the Chinese and the Germans are put together as outcasts from the pens of decency if not from God's grace. But it will be all one to the man who passes by and does not pause to see. The pilgrim however will find the graves of the stalwart Guardsmen, and remember that they met their end saving the day and marching the right way when the foe had broken through. The whole winter of 1917-18 might have been very terrible had the Germans gained a great victory here, and bad as it was the rout of March 1918 might have been complete. As you walk back from Metz to Gouzeaucourt you figure again the way the enemy was stopped and his grand potential victory robbed of its crown. In Gouzeaucourt the Guards took back a hundred and fifty guns. Beyond Gouzeaucourt Wood they cleared out the machine-gunners. Next day at dawn the Grenadiers made good the line and together with

the Indian cavalry closed the gap and dug in. The Indians were most happy in their association with the Guards in victory, and averred that henceforth December First would always be known as Grenadiers' Day.

Back at Metz the low-flying German airman who with his machine-gun had been whipping up the panic of the men who had fled was shot down. He was a young officer of the fearless angry type, terribly mortified at being taken prisoner. He was put in a cage by himself till one of our runaways came into the courtyard and began to strike a Charlie Chaplin pose, and the officer in charge lost his patience and thrust him in with the German. The German was striding up and down like a lion or tiger, and the sudden depression of the erstwhile Charlie Chaplin gave to the latter the gait of an Androcles thrown to a wild beast to be destroyed.

Later in the day German prisoners began to flow along the road from Gouzeaucourt to Metz in considerable numbers. What was the astonishment of the "Jerries" to find when they were put into the barbed-wire enclosures that their neighbours, also enclosed, were British and not German, and to see the mixed crowd of Old Bills, Labour-men, artillery-men, infantry, engineers, and even padres and officers mixed with men. Presently however these were marched out of the cages and lined up in miscellaneous squads derived

from varying units with no distinction of rank. Rifles were put into their hands and an attempt was made to use them as a reserve defence in the trenches outside Metz. This however proved impossible. The disease of panic had gripped their minds, and at the idea of being sent to fight once more many threw their rifles down.

Up in the lines there were many comical scenes and disputes. The men made themselves at home in the abandoned dug-outs which they found, and where the dinner had been left cooking they finished it and ate it. Drummers and pipers found superb quarters, and such original owners as turned up were much annoyed. Disputes were settled by neutral soldiers as a rule and went in favour of those who had not lost guns or abandoned their posts.

Where the railway intersects the Gouzeaucourt —Cambrai road was a wonderful supply train, better than any golden wreck in desert-island story. This was stacked with every imaginable kind of food. The Germans had been through it, but had devoted their attention almost exclusively to the letters and the despatch-bags. They had taken away a few tit-bits but what was left sufficed the Guards for days. The transport was warned not to send up their rations for three days but to send up limbers instead to cart the food. At the disposal of the victors were also a number of abandoned motor-cars. There is a lively

impression of a Sergeant-major going to and fro in a Ford car to this wonderful train. Authorities asked afterwards who had pillaged the train—the culprits ought to be brought to justice. But those in charge of that section of the line felt that the action was possibly excusable under the circumstances. Had they condemned it they had condemned themselves. The following lines by an unknown author appeared some months after the incident at Gouzeaucourt and men in the ranks copied it into their notebooks and diaries.

The Guards' Division were out to rest
They wanted it;
They'd "popped it"—"as on parade."
(What a jest!)
Then they'd held the line and had done their best
And were out.

Twenty-four hours had scarcely passed;
They were resting.
When an orderly—bearing a message fast—
"The Germans have broken through at last,
You're wanted."

And wanted they were—without a doubt—
At Gouzeaucourt.
The Huns had turned a lot of us out—
(A lot of us, mind you—supposed to be stout)
"Help wanted!"

Weary and footsore and stiff with cold—
Weren't shirking,
The Guards' Division, demeanour bold.
With drummers playing (so I'm told)
Went at 'em.

The Challenge of the Dead

Said an A.P.M. as they marched along—
"Stand back there!"
Get out of the way, you funking throng,
They'll put to rights what you've done wrong,
THE GUARDS DIVISION.
(And they did.)

After Gouzeaucourt it was slowly borne in upon the military mind that the "initiative," as it is called, had passed to the enemy, and that the rôle of attack would not be ours for a while. There was a great disparity between the forward mind and the rear mind. The forward mind registering all the buffets and "sticking it" was getting very sick of the war. The rear mind, making plenty of profit, playing men across the map like chess pieces, preserved all its zest. The rear mind had great patience and little imagination. It dreamed of a year, be it 1919 or 1920 or 1921, when America would be affording her maximum strength. America had to be played into the war. She had started late, and it would take years to commit her fully and make her spend according to her means. The Tommy and the poilu would hold on till then. The Hun, as the red hats loved to call the foe, would also play the game. 1918 was never intended as the final year of the war—as far as the rear mind was concerned, even though the men of fifty be called up and drilled with youths of eighteen. Fortunately for us all, the Germans had decided to win or lose and put all

things to the test that year. Theirs had been the supreme crime of starting the war, but let us acknowledge that they at least had the grace at last to "hands up" when they saw their game was lost and did not keep us at it for five years more. Germany at least saved us at last from what may be called the blood lust of the rear.

March 21st came with its never-to-be-forgotten bid for all or nothing, with the Kaiser in command and all Germany on the march. The largest numbers of men involved and the broadest front of action in the war. "*Nach Paris*" was the cry —"Paris, Paris," the exultant yell of the Goth bearing down upon the new Rome.

On the 19th and 20th there were suspicions that something new was in preparation on the German side. "From Headquarters to Headquarters," as one officer puts it, "throbbed the order to man the battle-stations." The night of the 20th was of intense darkness, and the watchful sentries at their posts stared into a deep and silent curtain of fog. The vague light that comes before dawn revealed only the mist.

Then suddenly on a mighty breadth of line spoke the guns, came the swift chasing shells through the sky, and the chorus of their sighs and their cat-calls and yells and the hubbub of disruption in their explosion. Trench mortars of all calibres and field-guns had been brought up to closest range under cover of mist and darkness,

and pounded into all our trenches thick and warm with khaki and live flesh and blood, and from behind the field-guns, but not far behind, in serried ranks spoke the heavy guns, the Russian heavies, the Italian heavies, the grand Austrian heavies, heaving death and destruction in the paths of retreat. Accommodated with the heavies in fiendish fraternal task were the light guns in vast numbers which flung the gas-bombs in tens of thousands to the spots where of a certainty there must be congestion of traffic in the British rear. It was ten minutes to five in the morning of the 21st March—*der Tag* had come, the hour of German fate had struck.

Our guns replied at once in mighty salvos from accustomed points on the horizon, but also many hitherto silent guns and batteries spoke for the first time. A steady and perhaps unimaginative confidence was expressed by our artillery, but it was quickly realised that we were out-gunned and out-manned. Our battery positions were soon drenched with mustard gas. The enemy firing was remarkably accurate and scored direct hits on many headquarters, billets, and ammunition dumps which had never been assailed before. The roads all received a great deal of attention and at many vital points deep craters threatened to hold up traffic for hours.

Daylight streamed through the mist. The guardians of the line with strained nerves and

brain stood on the alert expecting grey Fritz momentarily to emerge from the mist with lowering brows and bayonet at the port. Our machine-guns chattered at the unknown, and meanwhile the enemy wire-cutters were at work clearing the way. It was not until half-past nine that the anonymous artillery gave way to the deadly personality of the foe. On the same lavish scale as that in which the guns were firing, stick-bombs showered into the front lines, exploding with their deafening and would-be-terrifying concussion of high explosive. The enemy soldiers got rid of all the bombs they had right away, and then very soon they were themselves to be seen. Tommy faced forward. But Fritz, though he came steadily across no-man's land offering an easy target, came also from the flanks and was soon to be seen in the rear. British troops were massed here and there and posted in clusters of defence, but the enemy with his vastly extended waves broke through at the thin places and the empty places. The alarm went to the flanks and the rear, but the runners found their various headquarters and destinations full of the men in grey. Surrenders were rapid on all hands. It was a puzzle what had happened. Brave units fought it out against fearful odds. Some reserve battalions led by their Colonels rushed in to counter-attack, and the Colonels fell and the battalions fell. Other reserve battalions received orders to retire and they

retired. Others received no orders of any kind and remained where they were and were overtaken. All day of the 21st and all night long our lines were confusion worse confounded. On the 22nd there were Generals in the fray encouraging the defence in person and trying to re-establish lost contact right and left. But towards nightfall the last lines were overrun and the enemy was through.

The British menace was lifted from St. Quentin and Cambrai, from La Fere and Laon. The enemy plunged for Arras, Peronne and Ham, and for the far-flung hope of Albert, Doullens, Amiens, Compiegne. They rolled our legions back, they set Divisions marching, fleeing; they captured front-line men in tens of thousands, captured second-line men in tens of thousands, captured artillerymen, captured their guns, captured the Old Bills and Charlie Chaplins a-mending the roads, captured Red-cross men, captured Chinamen, captured the Y.M.C.A., captured an infinite array of stores and shells. If they were doubtful of themselves at first, their faith soon lit up, as how could it fail to light. The banner of a victorious end of the war and a crown of all German privations and sufferings was raised. "I heard nothing more dreadful in the war," said an English captain, "than the yell of the German cheers as their first men entered Ham and they knew they had broken the line and had us running.

Paris, Paris was the watchword, and many a Teutonic soldier mortally wounded in the moment of victory, sank joyfully to the rest of death in the belief that the Vaterland and the Kaiser were winning through at last."

And the embattled hosts swept onward toward Amiens, where at last the onrush was stabilised. A greater victory had been won than the German dreamed of when he planned. The offensive paused at last as it must, but a staggering blow had been dealt at the forces of George the Fifth. The King was down, and even if he were not counted out this time it was doubtful if he could survive many such rounds if the German could repeat such blows.

What a time that was for England! The war staff tried to keep the consternation to themselves but it could hardly be done. The whole nation trembled with anxiety and apprehension. In France, as we now know, screened from public view, the leaders of France and England met in a grave mood. There was Milner and Haig and Foch and Clemenceau. Haig, with a terribly pallid and drawn face looked as if he had not slept for three nights. Foch was nervous and excitable, and carried in his hand a small wooden wand on the knob of which was carved a poilu's head.

"I will do my best," said Haig pathetically, "to stop them before Amiens," and it seemed he doubted whether it could be done.

"We can always stop the Boche," said Foch, "we must stop him where he is, not at Amiens."

"But how?"

"Well, I could do it," said Foch. "Seal up the centre. The Boche has broken through the British and the French armies. His forces are pushing against the wings of folding-doors; each door gives a little, making a gap between, and through the gap the enemy is pouring. Seal up the gap, seal it up!"

There was only one way of sealing it up, and that was by uniting French and British forces under one single commander. Lord Milner saw it. He started up and pointed dramatically with his finger to Foch standing there with his wooden wand, and he cried out:

"There is the man."

Haig, endowed by God and nature with a fine character, at once came forward and agreed. No littleness stood in his way at that moment of destiny. Foch was the man, let Foch take the supreme command. Foch took it and poured French troops to our aid and stopped the tide and saved the great city, the railway-key of Calais and of Paris.

The great German effort had resulted first in German victory, then in a dramatic change in the leadership of the war. Doubtless the German took little stock of Foch. It seemed of good augury to our foe that the enemy should have

been forced to make a change in command. Changes of the kind are seldom good in the midst of a strenuous campaign. But the sway of Foch nevertheless gave a new faith to the whole army of the Allies. The famous S.O.S. was sent to Wilson: *We have our backs to the wall but send your army quickly or we perish.* And Wilson speeded up the transport of his army in a marvellous way. He also saved us.

Amiens, whose fate was in the balance for so many days, became baptised as a shrine of the war as the enemy long-range guns sent to it fire and death unintermittently.

What new fields and cities the enemy had opened for destruction! Had the Germans stayed before the city, the Cathedral of St. Firmin might have become as remarkable a ruin as the shrine of St. Vaast. St. Firmin is the patron saint of Amiens and is supposed to hold the city in his protection, and the pious of Amiens prayed to St. Firmin and to God in March 1918 as never before. That their prayers availed whereas other cities had fallen despite all prayer is not a fact on which to lay much stress. But it was just six months to the festival of St. Firmin, and ere that happy day came round the dreadful menacing demon had fled far from their walls.

Two years later behold the procession of the relics of St. Firmin at Amiens. The Church parades in praise and mediæval glory—cherubic

boys in crimson and white lace, young tonsured monks with health and life throbbing from their close-cropped skulls, aged ecclesiastics with Latinised faces, beautiful youths carrying emblems and banners, and then supported on either hand by wise and reverend fathers comes the Bishop, crowned with a gilded mitre crimson within and golden without, and streaming with two golden streamers hanging behind. He bears his golden crook, and before his arrested step and hand held up in blessing the people sway like reeds when the wind which bloweth where it listeth passes over them. From his uplifted hand and his arrested pose there flung out mysterious power. You felt it; it was the blessing of the Church imparted with all the consciousness of true succession even from Peter and from Christ.

So they bear what is left of the memory and the dust of St. Firmin, nodding as they go, looking like an ecclesiastical picture on a vast canvas, and singing to their measured steps—*Salve, Salve.*

The second round of 1918 was fought on the Lys when the Germans 'twixt Ypres on the north and Bethune in the south plunged towards Hazebrouck and St. Omer. Bailleul and Merville fell, the eminence of Kemmel was taken and Locre, and it seemed likely that the enemy would do with the sanctuary of Ypres what he had done with that of Albert.

The smashed centre of Bethune and the wilderness of its Grande Place testifies to the violence of the onset, and Hazebrouck still bears the marks of a great trembling and nervous shock. Hazebrouck had its three days of anguish when all its people fled, and the town, like a victim in a dungeon, awaited the coming of the persecutor. The cross-roads at Vieux Berquin are almost as sinister in the after-the-war light as they were then, and in all the waste fields which ran with destiny and khaki that April the rusty wire still lies in tangles. Rain streams on the choked cemeteries once but sparse with graves, now full and overflowing with the dead and their crosses. But you seek in vain for hundreds and thousands of defenders, names of V.C.'s, names of the brave undecorated—all lost now in the unknown, the plenitude of unknown soldiers.

The German won his second round, though not too well, not shaping very well. There were hammer-blows, but not the dreadful death-dealing weight of the March fighting. French troops had been hurried to Belgium by Foch, and once more they stopped the rot and possibly saved our now rather nervy army. Certainly the enemy was now having matters his own way. But Arras fortunately held, and that was our centre of defence. All expected that the next attack would be upon the city, an attempt at encirclement from the north and from the south. A wet

spring wore on to early summer and all the army waited.

The third attack was of an entirely unexpected kind, being an almost overwhelming blow at France and France alone—an attempt to put her entirely out of gear and make it impossible for Foch to send more troops to help the British army, an attempt to destroy the spirit and the mobility of the army of France. The enemy advanced on a front broader even than that of March 21st, and found an even thinner, weaker line of defenders. Once more Germany was able to do even more than she dreamed, and plunged towards Paris, making the sky drone and tremble with the ominous thunder of her approaching guns.

As we all know now the enemy went too far, and had not the men to man his greatly extended lines or the labour to reorganise the new rear. He had spent his energy too lavishly, and Foch had all that was necessary, the one extra punch which sent the German reeling even in the moment which should have held his greatest pride. The fourth round was won by Foch and the Americans. The fifth by the British when they rolled the foe back from Amiens. After that Fritz was a lost man and floundered backward homeward, playing only for time, and only on his defensive, with all the triumph gone, hope gone, faith gone, and only punishment and humiliation ahead of him. In but a short while after the most terrible defeats

it could be said that the Allies had won the war.

The land o'er which the great advance was made is quiet enough now. To the towns and cities of the back areas the circus is coming for the first time since the war. After the leaping from trapeze to trapeze in mid-air, after the walking the tight rope, and the facing wild beasts in their cages, and other feats of daring, the clowns come tumbling into the arena. So it is also in life. There is one all in Turkey-red riding backward on an ass, telling all and sundry how much more clever he is than the genuine heroes they have been clapping. He gains in the long run more applause than the tight-rope dancer. Then two funny Columbines with air-blown bladders pretend to fight and whack at one another with resounding boshes, clumps and raps, laying one another out, panting for breath, exhausting themselves, almost expiring, and yet weakly hitting out with their quaint weapons. And the populace forgets the thrill of the spectacle of the man in the lions' cage making wild beasts jump through hoops of fire. The clowns are to its taste. The scene-shifters are quietly preparing the arena for the next heroic item—"A Roman spectacle when the gladiators meet"—and the clowns divert public attention from the carpentering of such a show until all is ready for the heroes to come out. A fourth clown all the while strikes heroic attitudes

and mimics the after-the-war celebrities with apt buffoonery—now he is Wilson with the fourteen points, now he is D'Annunzio in mock heroic pose saying "J'y suis, j'y reste," now Lloyd George making the Germans pay by letting the Germans off paying. The malice of the buffoons provokes great mirth and takes the attention of the crowd so well that the heroes are almost forgotten, Tom Wildwest glowering from one of the exits and handling his rope and running noose as if he'd like to lasso the whole bunch of clowns and pull them out of the arena and the public gaze.

In the summer of 1918 there was a waiting time. The enemy was held and his utter defeat was manifest, but Time paused and the denouement paused. The French and Americans carried on. The British reorganised. The Germans began the knight's tour of the board with the right move first. The British army was bored with the war and looked homeward. Special wires conveyed the Derby result and the verdict of the Pemberton-Billing case. Pemberton-Billing became a great hero of the rank and file. The book of the 47,000 names of people who could be blackmailed was a popular idea—such is the readiness to believe evil.

At a battalion Sports near Saulty the Duke of Connaught watched the battalion clowns arrange a race for the tiniest tots of the French village. One clown had printed on his back "Breezy Bacchus" and the other "One of the 47,000,"

which was thought a most amusing and up-to-date cognomen. "One of the 47,000" won the obstacle race by and by. He had won the obstacle race each annual Sports of his battalion, an unwounded Tipperary man who had come right through, not only the hazards of so many races, but of the great race itself. Fate however claimed him at last when the war was nearly over, and a lone cringing gas shell sneaking through the air came and took his leg off. The French villagers, whose children he had guided in the baby race, shrugged their shoulders and had nothing to say.

The war-sun which was now setting did not sink in a grey haze or in mere cloud, but in blood. To take the final victory-march of even one Division, from Arras to Maubeuge—is it not marked by fresh graves all the way? The old and the new laid down their lives prodigally.

There is an extra sorrow for their death now because the pathos of being so near to deliverance and yet missing it was not known then. Though the German was beaten the war might last for years. A common gag used to be—

"Heard the news?"

"What's that? The war over?"

"All over bar the shouting."

But it was ironical, and there were few who saw the faint gleam of the new hope which came with the German retreat.

The Army did not know when it began its

advance that the familiar ruins of old villages were being left behind for good, that Berles au Bois with its growing graveyard and ruined church was placed finally behind, Monchy, Blairville, Hamelincourt, St. Leger, Bullecourt, Ecoust, behind for ever, that Albert, Maricourt, Bapaume, re-conquered Peronne, were all permanently held and soon to be left far in obscurity in the rear. It is strange to come back over this track again and see the site of hideous and monstrous latrines now overgrown with rankest weeds, to see the ruined barns all re-roofed, to see the dank acre into which, wrapped in the flag, your comrades were lowered down, to see what was left of the village church of Berles now brought flat because as it stood it was a menace, to see the place where but for the grace of God you might yourself be lying with a cross above your head, to see Monchy lifting itself with great difficulty from its sunken blocks of stone, to listen to the stillness and deadness of old lifeless ruins, to cross the stubble fields to Adinfer and hear the petrol plough methodically scouring the old lines, to approach once more the dreadfulness of Ayette.

The villagers have come back to the craters of death. There is an estaminet where was nothing before; there are salvage-made huts with "baby-elephant" roofs built o'er spots where for days lay the dead in a torture of wire. A family is in the estaminet, it was divided into five parts by

the war—five members of the family each in a different place and none of them in touch with any other, each believing the other four dead, two in different parts of Germany, one in Paris, one in Belgium, one in the Pyrenees. They are poor people, touched by their suffering to tenderness and generosity, and when there comes to them one who served as a soldier in the war they spread their best before him and do not want to take money for it—wonderful for France. But the people who have suffered are the best people there as elsewhere.

At Ablainzville the new brick cabins grow into being amid the high seared masts of her dead trees. At sunset the hard-working peasants are still in the fields. They have heaped old iron and wire on to the roads, and filled up the shell-holes and burned the weeds and broken the intractable hard moorland with tractor-drawn ploughs. They have riven the sturdy roots of the docks and the reeds, they have driven St. John's wort and rocket and willow-herb from the grain-field, turning up the tramped-down battered earth in huge slabs and chunks. The league of death which goes over the brow of the hill, that old no-man's land which the machine-guns swept is now a great black upturned drive of ploughing in which alight thousands of crows, all extruding from the earth and discussing what they find, talking and grabbing, fluttering and flying. Sodden green equipment has been

ploughed into the earth and still lies half exposed, and helmets like little coal-buckets disturb here and there the even surface of the land. It is heavy going, and your boots want to lift tons of mother earth, but you struggle on with eyes furtively engaged in "spotting" here a shell and there a bomb. Next year the corn will cover up all our sins.

The peasants complain that the Government gives them nothing. The Germans replaced some of the cattle they stole, but how about the French who commandeered their horses at the beginning of the war and in exchange gave them a merely nominal sum. In the stricken areas how few are the horses now! The conservative peasant who does not like changing his agricultural habits has been forced to the use of the petrol engine. His chief motive force is the old lorry engine. But of course he does more with that than he did with the horse, and when one has walked right across the zone of desolation and come to the little-touched farms on the other side one cannot but feel that the peasants working their horses there are not getting on so quickly as the deprived ones with their motors.

Many of the refugees when they came back started at an absolute zero. Their plight would have driven a less stubborn people to despair, but they set-to and worked, and can already show a dumbfounding progress. Theirs is a hard life with-

out luxury and with little food, but with the capital of their toiling hands they are making wealth for themselves and France once more. The people of the war-lands will recover quicker than their Governments, and whilst with every year the plight of the national exchequer gets worse the plight of the domestic exchequer will improve. There are too many parasites feeding on the Governments, and the latter have too many obligations in the matter of paying interest on loan. All France is placarded with appeals to French people to take up State-loans—the object of such loans being to get money to pay the interest on past loans. French people cannot be persuaded to pay onerous taxes. The Germans, without great commercial activity, cannot make the French deficit good, and we see the State sliding slowly but steadily downward like a loosened avalanche toward a precipice. But in the light of the French peasants' steady unremitting toil one need have little fear for the nation itself. It will get rid of this type of Government and the mountains of debt when the time comes. Long after sunset, in the after-murk of night, sound the droning of the petrol-ploughs on the old battlefields, and the clatter of hammer and plane in the stricken villages.—Vive la France!

It is twenty miles to Cambrai by the seemingly Druidical remains of Lagnicourt and the life-clusters of Queant, Pronville, Moeuvres, Fontaine.

Cambrai is resurgent. No one is in mourning except those widows whom black suits. The merry-go-rounds and the razzle-dazzle with all manner of toy-booths and gipsy-shows occupy the market-place on which grandiose buildings with broken windows stare. In the town gardens is a statue without a head, and on its base is engraved— "*Son invention fut un bienfait pour son pays.*"

He probably made some improvement in the manufacture of silk, but an ironical British soldier has written in English beneath— *He invented the gun stock.*

On the way out from Cambrai the towns of Boussieres and St. Hilaire look as if no war had been, and the trains are all running on the road to Solesmes. Where men stalked their foes along the railway embankment, where men won military medals and D.C.M.s and one the V.C. all is perfect prose. Where so many died and risked their lives a life-insurance office has reopened. All slumbers on the road to Le Quesnoy and Bavai. You have passed through the war area and come to the unscarred green of innocent fields and the undesolated symmetry of unscathed woods. Peasants lead the horses in the plough, and cows in plenty graze in sun-steeped pastures.

It is November 10th and the same strong highway on which two years ago the army marched to the end of the war. At the end of a fair fine afternoon the sun is sinking slowly but must be in

eclipse ere it set. Peasants are sitting on heaps of stones at La Longueville looking westward. In the smoky capitals of Europe nothing will be seen, but something is due to happen if the sky keeps clear and will be visible at the last outposts of the war.

From the grandeur of the setting sun pale shadows are cast of posts and cows and houses and railings and heaps of stones. Unexpectedly they faint away as something steals upon the splendour of the radiant disc and stops the brightness of the rays. Myriads of wisps of cloud, like tiny hands, assist at the eclipse, laying the sun to rest in a dreadful bloody bath, agonising and bleeding and growing less and going down, with evil triumphing over good. Out, brief candle! Yes, it is out—it is night. The last day of the war is done—to-morrow Armistice. The reaper has put up his scythe—the angel of death has gone by. A bitter wind passes swiftly along the highroad, just touching you, just making you aware that something invisible and unkind has passed you, having a going and a coming which is not yours.

So in a mood which has changed you walk the last miles of the war—to the fortress of Maubeuge. Here is gloomy smoky Douzies, and there, yes at that very spot, is the place where the Brigade messenger was accosted and you read his message—*Hostilities will cease as from eleven o'clock.* Yonder the factory sheds where you heard the first

lecture on demobilisation, where you sang "Take me back to dear old Blighty!" with such a will, and a free issue of rum punch was made to all. There the erstwhile deserted steel works which men said would be years before they worked again. The great stacks smoke, belying the prophecy, and on the night wind comes the clangour of tireless machinery working for France, working for Peace. On the railway all the twisted rails are gone, the lines gleam with the brightness of train-wheels and go straight to Maubeuge. Upon the roadway lie the disjecta membra of an armoured train marked Lot 1 and Lot 2 and likely to remain till time itself remove them.

You descend into the trough where the moat goes round the fortress, and by a wooden bridge enter Maubeuge, the city of the end of the war, one of the cities where the war ended. At Maubeuge then let us be silent with those who are silent whilst at Westminster the Unknown is buried and the Cenotaph unveiled and at Paris the Arc de Triomphe receives its guest.

November the eleventh in the morning—there is Mass in the Cathedral for the *poilu inconnu*, the anonymous soldier of France, and about an empty coffin swathed with the tricolour are ten high candles. The sacrifice is sanctified with holy water and incense. The divine elements are raised from the Altar. The throngs of the pious all cross themselves. Comes the alarm crash of the Sanctus thrice

repeated, the mumbo-jumbo of fast-gabbled Latin, the exultant organ. You stand wedged in by a pillar, the only Englishman there now, and as your eye ranges o'er the scene it reads on the Cathedral wall the inscription which is nearest. *N'oublie pas pecheur endurci que c'est pour la troisième fois que Jesus est tombé!* "Forget not, hardened sinner, that it is now for the third time that Jesus has fallen," suggestive and unforgettable monition given in the half-light of the Cathedral.

A Te Deum which does not rend the sky nor the Cathedral roof passes sweetly o'er our heads, and the congregation with its wreaths and flags files out to march with bands to the cemeteries of Maubeuge. It is still not eleven by the clock. But it will be eleven in the Place des Casernes where the Guards were drawn up on parade that November morning. The barrack square then!

Behold it dirty and drab. A squad in sabots is being detailed by a corporal for fatigue duty. They answer their names, their old tunics are all undone, they shuffle across the square. But it is eleven. Silence then. Let us be silent with all who are silent.

EPILOGUE

The afternoon train speeds from Maubeuge to Paris. "Am I right for Paris?" you ask, and a Frenchman replies facetiously "Nach Paris, nach Paris." In a few hours you roll up the whole Western front. You traverse infinite graveyards and scenes of desolation like an arrow of thought, and alight where the German soldiers wished to be. The train has come from Berlin : it has passed through Cologne and the zone held by the occupying army. It roars forward to St. Quentin, Noyon, Compiègne, like the symbol of the March offensive. But in all the little shattered towns and villages joy-flags are flying and the bands are playing. It is to-day a fête of French victory and French peace. Besides being Armistice Day it is the Cinquantenaire of the Republic, the day of the celebration of the first fifty years of the present Republic of France, and Paris will be alight from end to end to-night with fairy lights. Paris and France will render homage to the Republic which brought victory. In 1870 under the fatal Government of Napoleon the Third the hated German conquered France. Then the Napoleons fell and Gambetta made possible "la revanche du Droit."

Epilogue

It could hardly have been predicted that within fifty years the stricken unstable France of 1870 would lay the Prussian low. The victory over the Germans has been an enormous confirmation of the success of the "Third Republic" and has shed a glory on the line of Presidents from Thiers to Millerand which is perhaps not entirely appreciated in other countries. The Republic celebrating its fiftieth birthday on November 11th sunned itself in as much glory as the Army or the Nation. It is true that "un soldat sans nom, representant la foule heroique des poilus, repose dans l'Arc de Triomphe"—a nameless soldier representing the heroic crowd who fought is buried now in the Arc de Triomphe—but it is also true that the heart of Gambetta carried in a chariot accompanied the hearse of the unknown soldier, and whilst the soldier was buried in the first storey of the triumphal arch the heart of Gambetta was placed in the Pantheon itself. All must redound to the greatness of France and of the Republic.

As you step from the train at Paris you realise that everyone is out for gaiety even before the gaiety has commenced. The Parisians are holding on to one another, humming and singing baby-song, making believe to stumble as they walk. Gone are the care and solemnity of the week-day Paris crowd. A heaviness has been shed, everyone feels light as if there was quicksilver in his heels. Evening is just turning to night and

all houses are giving forth their people, and they stream to the centre in ever increasing crowds—all gay, all light-hearted, all without a thought of ever coming home. The city is cleverly decorated with massed flags, arcades of flags, but without those strings of bunting which so often look like coloured washing hanging out to dry. The illuminations are to be most elaborate. Hundreds of thousands of francs are being spent in coloured light effects. There will be a torchlight procession, massed bands, and street dancing till morning. Long lines of men and women holding on to one another plunge through the crowds, and scream, and break, and join again. Everyone is wearing a little flag of the Republic. Men and women are to be seen carrying little red paper lanterns on bamboo sticks. Every restaurant and café is crammed and jammed with people with flushed faces. The waiters, having lost control, bring you dishes you have not ordered, but you graciously accept them faute de mieux. Hawkers keep bellowing the last editions of the papers, especially of *L'intransigeant*, which says that the meaning of the festivity is that the Allies are agreed to force Germany to fulfil the treaty to the letter. Night meanwhile has become night with no stars above and all the stars below.

The crowds have become immense. If you are at the Place de la Concorde where part of the torchlight procession is forming up and men are

playing on the crowd with ghastly searchlights, then you are likely to remain at the Place de la Concorde. It will take you two hours to struggle to the Place de l'Opera. On the Underground railway some stations are blocked, and no one can get either in or out—notably Hotel de Ville. Out at the Arc de Triomphe there is a cavalry guard with drawn sabres. The Arc very fittingly has no illumination, but its dark mass catches the light beams from the buildings around. No one knows what is going to happen here, all the little folk stand on tip-toe and strain their eyes and yet see nought. Lots of girls are mounted on men's shoulders with legs round men's necks and their ankles grasped in male hands, and they certainly see the nothing which is to be seen. All are laughing, all are ready to sing and to roll in gaiety. Presently some statesmen in carriages pass out between lines of cavalrymen; big Bertha, the great gun, follows them and then an empty Roman chariot and the hearse on which the *poilu inconnu* was carried. But even when these pass the crowd remains riveted to the place where the unknown soldier reposes—constantly expecting some marvel of the night to start from there.

Similar crowds hold the Place Vendome where Napoleon stands on his column of stone, the St. Simon of Paris. This statue also commemorates a national victory over Germany, though it elevates one soldier so high. The design of the frieze at

the foot of the column is one of accoutrements and weapons and adornments and uniforms and guns, but without a limb or a face anywhere, the meaning being that one man wore all the glory. Here is exhibited not much joy in the Republic but a whole series of advertisement for French State loans. On the whole, the Cinquantenaire of the Republic may be a good advertisement for Government Stock. All manner of provincials have come to Paris for this day, and there is no doubt they are dazzled by the grandeur of France.

At the Palais Royal there is one of the most radiant designs in coloured lights. The whole front of the place is covered with a picture of light which reminds one of the advertisements of the great white way between 40th and 50th Street, New York. Crimson and emerald and gold tell the glory of the fifty years of the Republic, the numbers 1870 and 1920 being festooned with dazzling light, and the names of all the Presidents in one great row—Thiers, MacMahon . . . to Deschanel and Millerand—given the prominence of a dynasty. On all the sidewalks down below are trees of naked flames, gas-pipes with branches coming up out of the pavement and instead of leaves little jets of twinkling flame at which the crowd lights its cigarettes. The entrances to the grand avenues are surmounted by fantastic arches of most gorgeous illuminated colouring. In front

of all this stand men and women thoroughly epaté, hypnotised by it, with mouths open and eyes dilated.

"Oh but it's wonderful!" "I cannot take my eyes off it, can you?" "Look, neighbour, just look at that, eh!" "Ah but look!" "What splendour!" "What an effect!" And there is audible all the while a continuous collective low murmur of approbation and satisfaction.

You walk slowly along the Avenue de l'Opera. There are uninterrupted rows of footlights along the bases of first and second storeys throwing a lurid glamour on solemn and stately tricolours. So it is all the way to the Opera House, and happy crowds, fluttering and chattering, now breaking into an infection of expectancy when all push forward to see some imagined interest somewhere, and then lurching back in gay disillusion and laughter. The lofty buildings like monuments to the goddess of Trade look down on diminutive people with bright faces and round heads, and the stone itself of Paris seems indulgent.

Away however in those strange fields covered with darkness at this midnight hour, unilluminated, lie the silent ones, crosses without end—the signs of life laid down. France will not forget them and we shall not forget.

So let us leave this gaiety behind and take the midnight train for Calais, for Dover, for London, for the Cenotaph, the Abbey, for new life. It

is a full train and pulls out soberly from the gay city, and bears onward, onward to the little channel and the waiting boat which ere the dawn shall face the wonderful white cliffs of Albion and home.

The most enduring moment of Armistice Day will be the silence at eleven, the moment of communion. In America in many cities work ceased at eleven but every one was instructed to make the utmost noise possible. Thus a year ago at New Orleans the writer of these lines listened to an infernal din of train whistles, factory syrens, steam horns and hooters, clashing church-bells, roaring Klaxon-horns, hammering of anvils, squeaking of trumpets, and shouts of people. And the thought inevitably came—the West does not understand. It did not suffer as we did and came into a share in it all too late. Only the end of a small war can express itself in noise; the end of such an one as this in Europe was silence.

And a fitting monument of silence is the Cenotaph, the empty tomb. England is very happy in the Cenotaph, much more happy than in the Edith Cavell statue, which leaves out the last words of the kind nurse, does not say "*Patriotism is not enough*," but writes "Brussels Dawn" instead, making her a kindler of anger against a foe rather than a salver of wounds. The impersonal cenotaph, without any Cross or weeping Christ, or rampant lions, without even the

pronoun "our" which some wished to see upon it—"Our glorious dead," instead of "The glorious dead," can stand for all who laid down their lives baptised or unbaptised, white or coloured, friend or foe. For even Germans had to die that Europe might be free.

So in leaving the fields of the dead and the beginning and the end of the war and Paris itself, you come naturally to the Cenotaph, the stone which gathers to itself all the experience and all that was sacred in the war—the altar at the summit of a thousand weary steps. It stands in the midst of England's great street of Government, 'twixt Nelson and the Abbey, and says to all who pass—"Go and do thou likewise." To all the selfish, "*We were not selfish;*" to the clamorous, "*We are silent, yet we speak;*" to the strident and ambitious, to the self-seekers and the cynical, to those who live as though there had been no sacrifice, to those who sneer at the ideal, "*We suffered and died that you might have your life, that all might have more life; we suffered and died for the good of the whole!*"

When Millerand was elected President of France his supporters insisted always that they had found a man whose public life would be worthy of France *and of her dead.* France's ideal is that through the sacrifice of her sons France should become "greater yet." Our men did not die that England might become greater, but that Europe

might be saved from tyranny and greed, and it is for us and our public men to see that their sacrifice shall never seem to grow barren.

It will grow barren unless we who now live are ready to continue the sacrifice. No good comes into the world but after struggle and pain. No new life comes but through death, no common weal is gained without giving and serving. Our common life must have a foundation of human hearts, ready to give, ready to live, for England and for us all.

It hath been said: "He liveth best who is always ready to die."

It can be put in a new way: "He liveth best who is always ready to put all upon the Altar."

Humanity is well served when nations are ready to sacrifice themselves for her good.

She is worst served by the nations who still preserve the tribal instinct to fight and destroy their neighbours.

She is worst served by the nations who are enslaving other nations.

And that nation is most alive which has most people ready to sacrifice themselves and their estate.

That nation liveth worst which contains the most selfish.

Of Christ it was written: He saved others; Himself he could not save. But the selfish man saves himself first and then thinks of others.

The selfish man is quarrelsome and runs easily to law; he exacts guarantees; he counts his costs; he heavily insures; he holds what he does not want and is afraid of another getting it.

That nation liveth best whose men and women are freest for an adventure.

But worst whose men and women are most cautious.

Epilogue

He is most happy who has run to the Altar and surrendered his *all* there to God and then found a will and a way in which to live.

For most, alas ! there is no altar visible, no way to an altar. They do not know what the Altar is nor what it is for.

Business and war and hate and selfish desire have hidden it from men's eyes.

Only when the cloud lifts the Altar is disclosed, and men commonly when they see it leave all that they have and run to it and fling themselves before it in tears.

It is the grand altar of humanity. The altar of *all* on which the *one* sacrifices himself.

It is the altar of the sacrifice of Christ.

The Cross.

The quartering of humanity—an altar in the midst of the people.

All education and literature and religious mission should be to one end—that the way to the Altar may be kept clear.

It is work to clear away all the obstructions and the fogs and mists.

Sweet singing, pious exhortation, the reading of books, love of the dim religious light of churches—these should not be ends in themselves.

Humanity has its pious part which goes to church : but it does not need the organisation of the pious.

Humanity has its charitable part but it does not need the organisation of the charitable.

Humanity has its cultures but it does not stand in need of " schools of thought " and " cults " and " intelligentsia."

But humanity does need sacrifice upon the one great Altar, every day and all days.

The Cenotaph rising in our midst may be our altar. We may leave our flowers there, the incense-smoke of burning hearts, but the flowers should be our lives. The Cenotaph after all is only

the visible sign of the great invisible Cenotaph of humanity which stands in the midst of the ages, an empty tomb in memory of all those who have gone before—of those whose sacrifice *without ours* is not perfect.

At Westminster Abbey they have buried the dead soldier among poets and statesmen. They have dug up from France Tom, Dick, or Harry, one of us, unnamed, unknown, who laughed and talked and marched and fired and suffered in the war, one of the many who are always unknown. He did guard duty no doubt in France. He is put on sentry again. Touching as it is to have a soldier in the dim light of the Abbey where so many can shed invisible tears, it had been better perhaps in a stern era to have posted him at St. Stephen's, at the entry to Parliament, that he might challenge in his silence all who enter there to stand for England—

"Who goes there?"

"Friend."

"Advance and be recognised!"

"Pass, friend!"

Proceed at your peril if you cannot meet the challenge of the dead!

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